WARTON

ENQUIRY

1782

John Buckland
C C C Oxford

AN

ENQUIRY

INTO THE

AUTHENTICITY OF THE POEMS

ATTRIBUTED TO THOMAS ROWLEY,

IN WHICH THE ARGUMENTS

OF THE DEAN OF EXETER, AND MR. BRYANT,

ARE EXAMINED.

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M DCC LXXX II.

AN

ENQUIRY, &c.

ABOUT ten years ago, the late lord Henry earl of Litchfield ſhewed me a collection of manuſcript poems which he had juſt brought from Briſtol. He ſaid they were ſuppoſed to have been written by Thomas Rowley, a prieſt of the fifteenth century, and that they had lately been diſcovered in the pariſh-cheſt of Redcliffe church near that city. He did me the honour to aſk my opinion of their authencity. On reading a few of them, I expreſſed my ſuſpicions that they were moſt probably ſpurious. His lordſhip, whoſe excellent taſte and penetration I will here acknowledge even in ſpite of my own hypotheſis, replied, that he was ſurpriſed at my ſcepticiſm.

A I had

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I had not afterwards any convenient opportunity of examining at leiſure his lordſhip's manuſcript, which I believe contained all the poems ſince publiſhed under the name of Rowley, elegantly tranſcribed. They are ſtill preſerved in the library at Ditchley, accompanied with a plauſible and ingenious letter in defence of their originality, from my learned friend the late Preſident of Saint John's college Oxford, who was not the firſt doctor in divinity deſtined to be a dupe to this egregious impoſture.

The next year, my Brother, having been on a weſtern tour, ſent me ſome fragments of theſe poems, which he had accidentally procured from Mr. George Catcott, a reſpectable pewterer of Briſtol. About the ſame time, Mr. Barrett, a ſkillful ſurgeon of that place, and an intelligent topographer, obligingly tranſmitted a ſmall parchment containing the ACCOUNTE OF WILLIAM CANYNGES FEAST, ſaid to be one of the genuine manuſcripts of the poetry found in Redcliffe church: and from doctor Harrington of Bath, I received a paper of anecdotes concerning the manner in which this extraordinary treaſure was firſt brought to light. Soon afterwards, Mr. Catcott offered me the whole collection for ſeventy pounds. But I had

ſeen

ſeen and heard enough, and did not liſten to a propoſal, which on his own idea was not unreaſonable.

It may be aſked, why I did not immediately viſit the fountain-head of this wonderful diſcovery? It may ſeem matter of ſurpriſe, that the venerable Gothic vaulting of the antient muniment-room in Redcliffe church, and the maſſy monumental cheſt which preſerved theſe ineſtimable remains, had no charms to draw me to Briſtol, in the united character of critic and antiquary! That I was inexorable to the many preſſing invitations of Mr. George Catcott! That I took no pains, to examine original manuſcripts of ſuch antient Engliſh poetry as had not yet been ſeen, before they were unluckily miſlaid, or irrecoverably loſt! That I had no curioſity to inſpect the vellom-rolls, both purple and yellow, the catalogue of Cannynge's cabinet of medals, and the monaſtic antiquities of Briſtol, all authenticated by ſpecimens of the moſt obſolete ſpelling, and marked with the mellow veſtiges of evaneſcent ink, in the poſſeſſion of the communicative Mr. Barrett! An anonymous and angry critic, unexpectedly ſoftens his tone, and allows, that I was once within ſixteen

miles of Briſtol [a]. If not an indirect accuſation, I congratulate myſelf on this very candid conceſſion in my favour, from a writer ſo little inclined to give quarter. *Eſt quiddam prodire tenus*. But I will own much more, and what perhaps I ought in prudence to ſuppreſs. I have, in various years ſince the revival of Rowley, not only advanced within ſixteen miles of Briſtol, but at leaſt four or five times have actually arrived at that city, and have been even ſixteen miles beyond it. Yet I made no enquiries about Rowley or his poems. The truth is, the internal proofs had always appeared to me ſo convincing againſt the probability of the exiſtence of that pretended antient poet, as to ſuperſede the expediency of collecting facts, and of attending to any external arguments.

But if it had been abſolutely neceſſary, I found it almoſt impoſſible, to obtain a complete copy of the poems: and therefore, on the ſcanty ſtock of materials which I have mentioned, conſiſting of only one ſuppoſed original, and of a few imperfect extracts, haſtily taken, and incorrectly written, I ventured to open my criticiſm on the bard of Briſtol, in the ſecond volume of my Hiſtory

[a] Remarks upon the Eighth Section of Warton's History of English Poetry. p. 6.

of

of Engliſh Poetry. A ſcrutiny on the ſpot would perhaps have prevented ſome inaccuracies and mutilations with which I have there exhibited a few of the paſſages. But by neglecting to take this important meaſure, I have unfortunately fallen into other miſtakes and miſrepreſentations of no ſmall conſequence. Had I patiently reconnoitred the ground in perſon, I ſhould have avoided the diſgrace of many heavier imputations. For I have been ſo careleſs as to aſſert, that the poems were found in an iron cheſt, which in reality is an wooden one. I have confounded Saint Ewin's church at Briſtol with the cathedral. I have miſnamed the yellow for the purple roll. I have given Rowley's poetry to Cannynge, and Cannynge's to Rowley. I have ſuppoſed a youth to be ſeventeen who was little more than fifteen. I have transferred a worthy benefactor's bequeſt of an annual dinner, from a deed of gift to a will. With other unpardonable and unwarrantable hallucinations, of equal weight in determining the merits of this enquiry; and which remind us of the unexpected retort of Curl the bookſeller, who being ſtigmatiſed by Pope for having been ignominiouſly toſſed in a blanket, ſeriouſly declared he was not toſſed in a blanket but in a rug.

In

In the year 1777, a complete edition of the poems attributed to Thomas Rowley, exhibiting entire and correct copies of thoſe pieces which I had before only ſeen in detached parts, and comprehending others of which I had never before heard, was publiſhed under the care of an able critic. But this publication, a teſt to which now a full appeal might be made, inſtead of ſtaggering, only ſerved to ſtrengthen, my early apprehenſions of a forgery: and by multiplying evidences in ſupport of my ſuſpicions, furniſhed me with thoſe additional arguments, which I was now forced to throw together in the appendix to my ſecond volume abovementioned. Not long after, I had the ſatisfaction to ſee the ſame ſide of the queſtion adopted and defended by the editor of the poems, in Obſervations on their language, which appeared to me ſo deciſive, as to preclude all future attempts to prove theſe pieces an original production of the fifteenth century.

But of literary contention there is no end. The Briſtol-cheſt has become the box of Pandora to the critical world. This controverſy has been lately revived, in the moſt formidable ſhape, by Mr. Jacob Bryant, and the reverend the Dean of Exeter, who contend that Rowley's poems are genuine. As both theſe

theſe writers have condeſcended to controvert ſome of my arguments, and as what I have hitherto advanced only forms an incidental part of a larger and a more general work, I have thought it my duty to reſume this ſubject, to examine it with a greater degree of particularity, to extend and illuſtrate the principles I before had eſtabliſhed, and to conſider, if not to confute, the chief objections. To have been ſilent or even indifferent on this occaſion, would have betrayed a want of reſpect to the character of my two very learned and powerful opponents, or of proof in vindication of my original opinion. I would not incur the cenſure either of petulance or puſillanimity.

But even under theſe circumſtances, a diſpute about an unknown prieſt, who could compoſe poliſhed Engliſh verſes in the fifteenth century, and a blue-coat boy of Briſtol newly converted into an attorney's clerk, who could imitate the language of Chaucer and Lydgate, may perhaps appear too trifling to admit any further diſcuſſion. Inſignificant as it may ſeem, the determination of theſe queſtions affects the great lines of the hiſtory of poetry, and even of general literature. If it ſhould at laſt be decided, that theſe poems were really written ſo early as the reign of king

king Edward the fourth, the entire ſyſtem that has hitherto been framed concerning the progreſſion of poetical compoſition, and every theory that has been eſtabliſhed on the gradual improvements of taſte, ſtyle, and language, will be ſhaken and diſarranged.

My readers will obſerve, that in the courſe of this enquiry, I have not only ſuppoſed the poems to be ſpurious, but to have been forged by Thomas Chatterton, the youth by whom they were firſt diſcovered and circulated. They will alſo be pleaſed at the ſame time to remember, that my adverſaries have drawn an unfair concluſion from the reverſe of theſe two ſuppoſitions, that is, the antiquity of the poems, and the incompetence of Chatterton. From theſe two points, improperly blended and involved, Mr. Bryant and doctor Milles are perpetually ſtarting a dilemma, that becauſe the poems could not have been written by Chatterton, therefore they muſt neceſſarily be the compoſition of Rowley.

I ſhall diſtribute my arguments under the following heads. I. STYLE, COMPOSITION, AND SENTIMENT. II. METRE. III. ANCIENT LANGUAGE. IV. HISTORICAL ALLUSIONS. V. BATTLE OF HASTINGS, and ELLA a TRAGEDY. VI. COMPARISON

OF

CHATTERTON'S POEMS WITH THE POEMS ATTRIBUTED TO ROWLEY. VII. MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS. VIII. CHARACTER AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF CHATTERTON.

I. STYLE, COMPOSITION, AND SENTIMENT. I find it neceſſary to treat theſe principles indiſtinctly, as they are almoſt perpetually intermixed. And I ſhall conſider STYLE in its moſt extenſive ſignification, not only as including general ſtructure, but verſification.

Theſe poems exhibit, both in the connection of words and ſentences, a facility of combination, a quickneſs of tranſition, a rapidity of apoſtrophe, a frequent variation of form and phraſe, and a firmneſs of contexture, which muſt have been the reſult of a long eſtabliſhment of the arts and habits of writing. The verſification is equally vigorous and harmonious, and is formed on a general elegance and ſtability of expreſſion. It is remarkable, that whole ſtanzas ſparkle with that brilliancy, which did not appear in our poetry till towards the middle of the preſent century. The lines have all the tricks and trappings, all the ſophiſtications of poetical ſtyle, belonging to thoſe models which

were popular when Chatterton began to write verſes.

Our old Engliſh poets are minute and particular. They do not deal in abſtraction and general exhibition, the effects of affectation and a reſtleſs purſuit of novelty. They dwell on realities. Even in the courſe of narration or deſcription, where poets of the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries would have uſed the literal expreſſion, and repreſented the ſubject by the mention of natural circumſtances, the writer of theſe pieces adopts ideal terms and artificial modes of telling a fact, and too frequently falls into metaphor, metaphyſical imagery, and incidental perſonification.

Thus in the BATTLE of HASTINGS, where the intoxication of Harold's army on the eve of the engagement is deſcribed, the poet ſays,

Thro everie troope Diſorder reer'd her hedde [b].

Again, in the TRAGEDY of ELLA, a meſſenger, or watchman reports,

—— Dyſorder thro oure hoaſte
Is fleynge, borne onne wynges of Ælla's name [c].

In GOODWYN, of a melancholy ſcene,

And Sadneſſe ynne the owlette ſhake the dale [d].

[b] B. H. ii. 15. [c] Ver. 574. [d] G. T. 193.

In

In the EPISTLE to MASTRE CANYGNE, the ignorance of the barbarous ages is thus expreſſed.

When Reaſon hylt [d] herſelfe in cloudes of nyghte [e].

In the EXCLLENTE BALADE OF CHARITIE, a ſtorm is painted.

The windes are up: the lofty elmen ſwanges.

This is natural and circumſtantial. Again, the rattling thunder

Shakes the hie ſpyre. —— ——

But the thunder-clap, when its ſound and force are ſpent,

Still on the gallard [f] eare of Terroure hanges [g].

A builder of ruins is ſeldom exact throughout, in his imitation of the old-faſhioned architecture. Some modern moulding or ornament will here and there unfortunately be detected, in the bend of an arch, the tracery of a niche, or the ramifications of a window. Some member of the Chineſe Gothic will unavoidably peep out, and betray the fraud. But to proceed.

In the FIRST ECLOGUE, Robert one of the ſhepherds diſplays the miſeries of the civil war between York and Lancaſter by

[d] Hid. [e] Ver. 2. [f] Frighted. [g] Ver. 39.

complaining, that ENGLAND now wears a bloody dreſs, and ſtains her face with the gore of her own heroes: that PEACE is fled, and DISORDER ſhews her darkſome complexion,

> And thorow ayre doth flie yn garments ſteyned with bloude [h].

And the ſubject is thus opened,

> Whanne Englande ſmeethynge [i] from her lethal wounde
> From her galled necke did twytte the chayne awaie [k].

In this conteſt many brave Engliſhmen fell. And why?

> —— Twas Honour led the fraie [l].

In the TRAGEDY of ELLA, Celmonde in imploring ſucceſs for the *gentle* Ella, wiſhes that the moon, in its varied changes, may *ſhed* various bleſſings on his head,

> Beſpreyngyne far abrode Miſchaunce's night [m].

To which we may add,

> Myſelfe, and all that's myne, bounde ynne Miſchaunce's chayne [n].

Night, in the ſame play, is thus deſcribed in terms of which I underſtand enough to perceive their impropriety.

[h] Ibid. 60. [i] Smoaking. [k] Ibid. 1.
[l] Ibid. 4. [m] Ver. 78. [n] Ibid. 4.

Wyde

Wyde ys the ſylver leme of Comfort wove [o].

And in another deſcription of night, where an old poet in deſcribing moonlight, might perhaps have ſaid that the Fairies now began their revels, our author's imagination goes much farther. He uſes the agency of a ſyſtem of ideal creatures, as a vehicle for his general diſpoſition to abſtracted poetry.

The tryppeynge Faeries weve the golden dreme
Of Selineſſe [p], whyche flieth with the nyghte [q].

Ella, thus figuratively, and with the introduction of Maſterſhip imperſonated, exhorts his heroes to battle. To ſay nothing of the luſtre of the language and verſification.

And everyche champyone potte the joyous crowne
Of certane Maſterſchyppe upon hys gleſtreynge browes [r].

Again, Ella having been ſucceſſively compared to a tree, a ſtar, a fire, a mountain, a rock, and a young wolf, marches to the field, under the protection of the ſame redoubted divinity.

With gore-depycted wynges Maſterie arounde hym fledde [s].

Every page affords theſe ſtriking and characteriſtic features of falſe refinement.

[o] Ibid. 1010. [p] Happineſs. [q] Ecl. i. 31.
[r] T. E. 590. [s] Ibid. 762.

Almoſt

Almoſt every ſtanza preſents one of thoſe fantaſtic agents, which compoſe the train of modern poetry.

But the appearance of theſe images is not only tranſient and incidental, as ariſing out of the courſe or tenour of a narrative or a ſpeech. Our author's propenſity to perſonification is ſometimes indulged to a far greater extent. And here it is no leſs exceptionable. Not to advert at preſent to the decorations of expreſſion, his HOPE, FREEDOM, and BATTAYLE, are delineated on too large a ſcale for the ſimplicity of a remote period. The terrible groupe of Miſeries and Misfortunes which Sackville in the MIRROUR OF MAGISTRATES has ſtationed at the portal of hell, and the imbodied paſſions, virtues, and vices, of Spenſer's FAIRY QUEEN, a poem profeſſedly allegorical, have not that amplitude of proportion, diſtinctneſs of figure, ſelection of pictureſque attributes, diſcrimination, activity, and life, which conſtitute the perſonal creations of Rowley. But Rowley preceded Sackville and Spenſer by a century. I muſt give the portrait of FREEDOM, with her attendants. It makes a chorus in the tragedy of GODDWYN.

Whanne

Whanne FREEDOM dreſte in blodde-ſteyned veſte,
To everie knight her warre-ſonge ſunge,
Uppon her hedde wylde wedes were ſpredde,
A gorie anlace by her honge.
Shee daunced onne the heathe,
She hearde the voice of deathe:
Pale-eyned AFFRYGHT, hys harte of ſylver hue,
In vayne aſſayled her boſomme to acale [t]:
She hearde onflemed [u] the ſhriekyng voice of woe,
And Sadneſſe in the owlette ſhake the dale.
She ſhooke the burled [w] ſpeare,
On hie ſhe jeſte her ſheelde,
Her foemen all appere,
And flizze [x] along the feelde.
POWER, wythe his heafod ſtraught [y] ynto the ſkyes,
Hys ſpeere a ſonne-beame, and his ſheelde a ſtarre,
Alyche [z] twaie brondeynge gronfyres [a] rolles hys eyes,
Chaftes [b] with hys yronne feete, and ſoundes to war.
She ſyttes upon a rocke,
She bendes before hys ſpeere,
She ryſes from the ſhocke,
Wieldynge her owne in ayre.
Harde as the thonder doth ſhe dryve ytte on,
Wytte ſcillye wympled gies [c] ytte to his crowne,
Hys longe ſharpe ſpeere, hys ſpreddynge ſheelde ys gon,
He falles, and fallynge rolleth thouſandes down.
WAR, goare faced WAR, by ENVIE burld [d], ariſt [e],
Hys feerie heaulme [f] noddynge to the ayre,
Tenne bloddie arrowes in hys ſtraynynge fyſte [g]. ——

[t] Cool. Freeze. [u] Undiſmayed. [w] Pointed.
[x] Fly ſwiftly. [y] Head Stretched. [z] Like.
[a] Flaming meteors. [b] Stamps. [c] With ſkill concealed, guides. [d] Armed. [e] Aroſe. [f] Helmet. [g] G. T. 184.

Sackville

Sackville and Spenſer muſt here yield the palm of allegoric poetry, and freely confeſs,

Nobis non licet eſſe TAM DISERTIS!

Yet on this very ſuſpicious ode, unhappily one of the moſt ſhining paſſages in all the poems, doctor Milles thus expatiates. "This "Ode, or Chorus, is undoubtedly one of the "moſt ſublime compoſitions of Rowley's "pen. — It ſcarcely contains a redundant "word, or fails in a deficient expreſſion; "nor can its powerful imagery be conveyed "in more conciſe or emphatical language. "Freedom never appeared in a more original "dreſs, than in her ſummons to war, in "her wild attire, her undaunted ſpirit, her "enduring fortitude: and the effectual man-"ner in which ſhe avenges herſelf of her "enemy. The idea of Power is conveyed in "the moſt lofty images, &c [h]." This hyperbole of panegyric perhaps proves too much. The learned preſident of the ſociety of antiquaries could not have produced more preciſe or ſatisfactory proofs, that this celebrated ode was not written three hundred years ago. It is Chatterton's misfortune to be convicted of forgery, not only by himſelf, but by his friends. His pretenſions to anti-

[h] Milles's ROWLEY, p. 298.

quity

antiquity are alike endangered by the excellence of his own poetry, and the praiſes of his commentators.

But let it be granted, that this is as perfect a model of allegoric delineation as any which has yet appeared in Engliſh poetry. The wonder is diſſolved, by re-recurring to the ſuperiority of Rowley's genius. But ſuperiority of genius, in the infancy of compoſition, never yet produced a perfect model. A great genius, at ſuch a period, in the boldneſs of native conception, will ſtrike out ſublimities and beauties never before ſeen. But theſe will be vague, extravagant, and undigeſted. The truth is, ſuch a delineation as this before us, is not the work of genius but of art. It is the tardy product of the accumulated practice, experience, and invention, of previous writers, who have ſucceſſively been toiling for the uſe of poſterity, and have ſupplied materials for future amplification and refinement. Poetry, like other ſciences, has its gradual acceſſions and advancements. The united labour of paſt ages contributes to its maturity. The diſcoveries of Newton in natural philoſophy, are the bright ſuperſtructure of a foundation laid by a long ſeries of celebrated predeceſſors. Mr. Bryant has obſerved, in vindication of

the poſſibility that ſuch poetry might have been written in the fifteenth century, that in every age there will be one perſon more eminent than the reſt. But this eminence will be circumſcribed or determined by adventitious and external circumſtances. It will bear down many obſtacles, but it will be impeded by others. Invention is not confined to any age. But it will be differently exerted at different eras. It will not always have the ſame appearance. The Dean of Exeter informs us, that the objection to the excellence of Rowley's poetry "amounts only to this, "that the fifteenth century has not pro-"duced, and therefore could not produce, "ſo great a genius as Rowley[i]." Let us allow that it did produce Rowley. But how comes it paſs, that this great genius ſhould have *preciſely* copied the ſtyle of the eighteenth century? Rowley might have formed a ſtyle: but it would not have been the ſame as that now exiſting. Genius is, in its nature, abſolute, independent, and univerſal. But we ſhould remember, that genius is connected with compoſition. It will acquire a determinate character and ſpecies. It will be in-

[i] Milles's ROWLEY, p. 380.

fluenced

fluenced by the condition of ſociety. It will aſſume accidental and arbitrary forms. It will be ſubject to new and peculiar modifications.

Let us look back on the manner of writing practiced by our old poets. A ſlight compariſon will contribute to demonſtrate Rowley's conformity with the modern.

Of old Engliſh poetry, one of the ſtriking characteriſtics is a continued tenour of diſparity, not ſo much in the ſtyle as in the ſentiment. But the bad predominates. In this ſort of reading, we are but rarely relieved from diſguſt, or rouzed from indifference. We are ſuddenly charmed with a beautiful thought in the midſt of a heap of rubbiſh. Like Addiſon's traveller in the deſert who finds an unexpected fountain, if in the barren extent of a thouſand lines we diſcover a ſolitary ſimilie,

We bleſs our ſtars, and think it luxury!

In the unpoliſhed ages, the muſe was too awkwardly or too weakly courted to grant many favours to her lovers. In Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate, elegant deſcriptions, ornamental images, and melodious couplets, bear no proportion to pages of languor or mediocrity, to prolix proſaic details in rhyme, unintereſting and tedious. But the

poems before us are uniformly ſupported. They are throughout poetical and animated. They have, to ſpeak in general terms, no imbecillities either of thought or diction.

But to have been dull would not have ſuited Chatterton's purpoſe, nor indeed was it conſiſtent with his genius. His aim was to dazzle and ſurpriſe, by producing ſuch high-wrought pieces of antient poetry as never before exiſted. But to ſecure our credulity, he ſhould have pleaſed us leſs. He has ſhewn too much genius, and too little ſkill. *Fallit te incautum pietas tua.* Over-acting his part, and unable or unwilling to repreſs his abilities, he awakened our ſuſpicions, and expoſed his want of addreſs in attempting to deceive. He ſacrificed his veracity to an imprudent ambition. Inſtead of wondering at his contrivance, we find he had none. A mediocrity of poetical talents would have ſucceeded much better in this impoſture. He was too good a poet to conduct and execute ſuch a forgery. He conceived, that his old poetry would be ſufficiently marked by old words and old ſpelling. But he took no caution about thoughts and imagery, the ſentiment and the ſubſtance. He had forgot, or never knew, or was not inclined to believe, that the garb of

anti-

antiquity would but ill become the elegance of Pope, or the ſpirit of Dryden. So juſt is the obſervation of doctor Milles, when comparing the ideas of Rowley and of Chaucer. "The niceſt obſerver will ſcarcely diſcover "a feature of reſemblance between the two "poets [k]."

To purſue this compariſon yet farther. Our antient Engliſh bards abound in unnatural conceptions, ſtrange imaginations, capricious extravagancies, and even the moſt ridiculous inconſiſtencies. But Rowley's poems preſent us with no incongruous combinations, no mixture of manners, inſtitutions, uſages, and characters. They have no violent or groſs improprieties. In our old poets, Ovid and ſaint Auſtin are ſometimes cited in the ſame line. Our old poets are perpetually confounding Gothic and claſſical cuſtoms, knight-errantry and antient hiſtory, ſcripture and romance, religion and chivalry. They make no diſtinction between ſacred or profane perſonages, between ſaints and heroes, the warriors of the Iliad and of the Round Table, conjurers and logicians. Helen and the holy virgin are often compared for beauty, for proweſs Sir Triſtram and Joſhua,

[k] Milles's ROWLEY, p. 168.

and

and for wiſdom Merlin and Ariſtotle. When a ſeries of illuſtrious lovers is enumerated, Sampſon and Dalila, David and Bathſheba, and Solomon with all his concubines, are arranged in company with Dido and Eneas, Medea and Jaſon, and Hercules and Deianira. In Gower's CONFESSIO AMANTIS, Ulyſſes is ſuppoſed to have learned rhetoric of Cicero. In Lydgate's metrical LYFE OF OUR LADY, there are two long chapters, "Howe "Joſeph went to ſeeke a mydwyfe, and "howe our Lady receyved the mydwyves [1]." The ſame poet, a ſcholar and an eccleſiaſtic, and till our late diſcoveries, one of the firſt poetical luminaries of the fifteenth century, makes Priam found a chantry in the capital church of Troy for Hector's ſoul. Such was then the condition of writers and of readers, that Lydgate, in another poem has ſeriouſly verſified the rubrics of the miſſal, which he applies to the god Cupid, declaring that he frequently meditated with great delight and edification on the holy legend of thoſe conſtant martyrs, who were not afraid to ſuffer a lingering death for the faith of that omnipotent deity. Do we find any of theſe weakneſſes, theſe palpable abſurdities, in Rowley?

[1] CH. xxxvii. xli.

I have

I have been ſhewing that theſe poems, in ſtyle, compoſition, and ſentiment, are not genuine, from their diſſimilitude to the antients, and their reſemblance of the moderns. That reſemblance has hitherto been diſtantly inferred from general caſt and colouring. But the proof does not reſt here. It may be drawn ſtill cloſer.

Theſe poems abound with modern words, and modern formularies of expreſſion: with whole lines, and often prolix paragraphs, not to be poſſibly diſtinguiſhed from the compoſition of the preſent day.

I begin with ſpecimens of modern words, and have ſelected the following from many others. A ſlight comment will be ſufficient. *Puerilitie*. B. H. i. 67. "Together "both han byn *ybred*." *Bred* did not antiently ſignify *educated*, or *brought up*. Ibid. 68. Before his *optics*. Ibid. 407. "*Blameleſs* "tongue." This epithet, peculiarly uſed, is from Pope's Homer. Ibid. 537. *Latiniſed*. EPIST. CAN. 18. "Gethre upp the ſperes "*beſprente*." This word, now moderniſed by frequent uſe, and in this ſenſe, antiently ſignified *beſprinkled*, not *ſcattered*. TOURN. 154. "The aucthoure of the *piece* which "we enacte." That is, of the *play*. PROL. CAN. 7. *To feare the Lorde*. B. T. 247.

Servantes

Servantes of the Lorde. Ibid. 199. *Godlie pſaume.* Ibid. 273. In the three laſt inſtances we have the phraſeology, ſuggeſted by the ſtanza, of Sternhold and Hopkins. "Veſſell "wreckt upon the *tragick* ſande." B. H. ii. 519. "The *proto-ſlene* manne." Ibid. 38. "*Succeſs* and cheerfulneſs depicted on each "face." *Succeſs* had not yet attained this abſolute ſignification. Ibid. 30. "Somme-"tyme *at tragedie* they laughe and ſynge." *Tragedy* was not now known for a play, much leſs the familiar expreſſion *at tragedie*. Ep. Can. 29. "Wee ynn godeneſſe wylle be "*greate*." *Great* was never thus uſed by any antient writer. T. E. 150.

I paſs on to modern formularies and modern combinations. "*Thus* Leofwine." B. H. ii. 101. *Thus he.* Ibid. 111. "Nor "Norcie, could thye myghte," Ibid. 341. "O Alfwolde, *ſaie*, how ſhall I ſynge of thee, "Or telle, &c." Ibid. 311. Such apoſtrophic introductions, for diverſifying the tenour of the narrative, did not belong to the rhetorical ſchool of the fifteenth century. We have ſometimes *He ſaid*, in the ſame poem at concluding a ſpeech. "Syſters in ſorrowe." E. iv. 15. "Wake the morne." Ibid. 22. "The "notte browne [nut-brown] Elinoure." Ibid. 5. "Warre-ſong." G. 185. "Bigge with "fate."

" fate." B. H. ii. 303. " Poygnant arrowes " *typp'd* with deſtinie." B. H. i. 13. " What " doughtie Homer ſhall his praiſes ſynge?" B. H. ii. 442. " Oh Goddes." T. E. 697. " Ye " Goddes! Howe is a lover's temper formed." Ibid. 915. " Now by the Goddes." Ibid. 713. " Goddes, here the Saxonnes." Ibid. 725. Who does not perceive in ſome of theſe inſtances the cant exclamations of modern tragedy? " Tourne thee." Ibid. 88. " Awaie, " Awaie!" Ibid. 244. " Oh Turgotte, " whereſoever thie ſprite, &c." B. H. ii. 581. Of this mode of addreſs, too artificial for Rowley's age, our author is remarkably fond. " Oh thou, whateer thie name, Or " Zabulus, &c." T. E. 426. " Oh thou " whereer thie bones, &c." S. E. 29. " Mie " womannes breſte." T. E. 1004. " Ah " what avayl'd, &c." B. H. ii. 337. " Ah " what avayl'd the lyons, &c." B. H. ii. 70. To enumerate his compound epithets, ſuch as the " owlet's *eve-ſpeckt* wing," the *ſpire-* " *girt* towne," and a thouſand others, would be tedious and trifling. Had they been uſed at all by the antients, they would have been conſtructed with much leſs art, and more ſparingly introduced. In the BATTLE of HASTINGS, the terms of application and introduction to his compariſons, *As when,*

Such was, and the like, are very ſuſpicious. Particularly his affected repetitions of the things compared, with the conſtant introduction of the illuſtrative adverb *So*. As thus.

Browne as the fylberte droppyng from the ſhelle,
Browne as the nappy ale at hocktyde game,
So *browne* the crokyd rynges that featlie felle
Over the neck of the all-beauteous dame.
Greie as the morne, before the ruddie flame
Of Phebus charyott rollynge thro the skie,
Greie as the ſteel-horn'd goats Conyan made tame,
So *greie* appeard her featly-ſparklyng eye.——

Sweet as the voice of thraſſarkes in the ſpring
So *ſweet* the wordes that from her lippes did falle. —

Tapre as candles laid at Cuthbert's ſhryne,
Tapre as almes that Goodrickes abbie ſhrove,
Tapre as ſylver chalices for wyne,
So *tapre* was her armes and ſhape ygrove [m].

Surely our author muſt have ſeen the following lines, which I tranſcribe from an *authentic* manuſcript in my poſſeſſion, rather older than the diſcovery of Rowley's poems.

Thus when a Barber and a Collier fight,
The Barber beats th' unhappy Collier white;
In comes the Dyer, of cerulean hue,
And beats the Barber and the Collier blue:
Next comes the Brickduſtman with rouge beſpred,
And beats the Barber, Collier, Dyer, — red:

[m] B. H. ii. 411.—435.

The

The rallying Collier heaves his empty ſack,
Knocks down the Brickduſtman, and beats him black.
So blue, ſo red, the bridal morn aroſe,
When Belimperia wak'd from ſoft repoſe:
So red, ſo black and blue, ſo black and white,
Look'd Holofernes when he ſaw the ſprite!

But many entire lines, and often prolix paragraphs, cannot be diſtinguiſhed from the compoſitions of the preſent day. The limits of this pamphlet, in which I do not mean to reprint the greateſt part of Rowley's poems, will admit only a few ſpecimens. The reader will perceive, that the artificial ſprinklings of obſolete ſpelling, and ſometimes of old words, detect what they ſhould diſguiſe.

In the BATTLE of HASTINGS.

But lyv'd in love, and Roſaline's embrace [n].

In the ſame,

Bothe ſcorn'd to yeelde, and both abhor'd to flie,
Reſolv'd to vanquiſh, or reſolv'd to die [o].

Doctor Milles obſerves, that "theſe two lines "have an appearance of modern phraſeology; "but ſuch ideas are common to writers of "every age [p]." But not ſuch a conſtruction, nor ſuch an arrangement of expreſſion.

[n] B. H. ii. 208. [o] Ibid 349. [p] Pag. 80.

In the ſame,

And ſtopt his driving ſteedes, and hid his lyghtſom ray [q].

This ſort of augmentative, ariſing from a repetition of the conjunction, *And*, after the pauſe in the middle of an Alexandrine, is, I believe, firſt uſed by Dryden. It might have been mentioned as an inſtance under the head of modern formularies.

In the ſame,

Felte a dire arrowe burnynge in his breſte;
Before he dyd, he ſente hys ſpeare awaie,
Thenne ſunke to glorie and eternal reſt [r].

In the ſame,

Such majeſtie was in her porte diſplaid,
To be excell'd by none but Homer's martial maid [s].

In the ſame,

—— —— —— The ſun, her mind,
Did guilde her mortal ſhape, and all her charms refin'd [t].

In the ſame,

He clos'd his eyne in everlaſtynge nighte:
Ah! what avayl'd the lyons on his creſte [u].

In the TRAGEDY of ELLA,

—— —— —— Thie beauteous hue,
Whyche ſtrooke mye mynde, and rouz'd my ſofter ſoule [w].

[q] B. H. ii. 220. [r] Ibid. 252. [s] Ibid. 400.
[t] Ibid. 440. [u] Ibid. 278. [w] Ver. 26.

In

In the ſame,

Hear from my groted [x] harte the lover and the friend [y].

In the ſame,

Brynge mee a ſtede with egle winges for flyghte,
Swyfte as mie wyſhe, and, as mie love ys, ſtrong [z].

In the ſame,

That, I on Birtha's breſte, may thynke of warre no more [a].

In the ſame,

Mie race of love, mie race of lyfe, ys ronne [b].

Of a ſpire, in the poem ONN OUR LADIES CHYRCHE,

That ſhootes alofte into the reaulmes of daie [c].

In the BRISTOWE TRAGEDY.

Be thyne the olyve rodde [d].

In the opening of the ſecond part of the BATTLE of HASTINGS.

Oh TRUTH! immortal daughter of the ſkies, ——
Teach me, fayre Saincte! thy paſſynge worth to pryze,
To blame a friend, and give a foeman prayſe [e].

Where, by the way, a prieſt of the fifteenth century would never have called TRUTH a Saint: but would have done, what doctor Milles thinks happily avoided for this truly

[x] Offended. [y] Ibid. 337. [z] Ibid. 911.
[a] Ibid. 1144. [b] Ibid. 1172. [c] Ver. 7.
[d] Ver. 72. [e] B. H. ii. 1.

Pindaric

Pindaric addreſs, would have "opened with "a melancholy ejaculation in the ballad-"ſtyle [f].

In the poem on HAPPINESS, Content is thus elegantly hailed,

All hayle CONTENTE, thou mayde of turtle-eyne [g]!

I will cloſe this tedious ſeries of quotation with one whole ſtanza, from the BATTLE of HASTINGS, deſcribing an earthquake.

As when the erthe, torn by convulſyons dyre,
In reaulmes of darkneſs hid from human ſyghte,
The warring force of water, air, and fyre,
Braſt [h] from the regions of eternal nyghte,
Thro the darke caverns ſeeke the reaulmes of lyght:
Some loftie mountaine, by its fury torne,
Dredfully moves, and cauſes grete affryght,
Now here now there majeſtie nods the bourne [i],
And awfulle ſhakes, mov'd by th' almyghty force,
Whole woods and foreſts nod, and ryvers change theyr courſe [k].

[f] Pag. 97. [g] Ver. 8. [h] Burſt, i. e. burſting.

[i] Projection of a rock or promontory, from Shakeſpeare's "dread ſummit of this chalk *bourn*," in KING LEAR, iv. 5.

[k] B. H. i. 191. Had I not been preoccupied by others, I would here have added Chatterton's numerous literal imitations of modern Engliſh poets. I will, however, point out one, which I think has not been yet mentioned. ONN OUR LADIES CHYRCHE, P. i. 5.

—— Some counynge fairie hande
Yreer'd this chapel in this lande.

Evidently

Before I cloſe this head, I muſt obſerve, that in extenuation of the objection ariſing from the ſmoothneſs and elegance of Rowley, it is pretended that his native aſperities have ſometimes been ſoftened and moderniſed, and perhaps the defects of his manuſcripts interpolated, by the officious hand of Chatterton. If this be true, where is the value or curioſity of this boaſted diſcovery of antient Engliſh poetry? If a modern corrector has been at work, he has apparently been ſo very buſy, as to leave but little or none of the original.

Evidently from Gray's LONG STORY, that mixture of true poetry and falſe humour. ver. 4.

Employ'd the power of fairy hands
To rear the cieling's fretted heighth.

Moſt of theſe imitations are paſſed over by the Commentator. But he obſerves in general, "If Chatterton could be "ſuppoſed to have borrowed ſuch *diſtant* and *immaterial* allu- "ſions from our modern Engliſh poets, would he not have "endeavoured to grace his compoſitions by copying their "*ideas and language* in the more imperfect and beautiful "images of their poetry?" That Chatterton has copied their *ideas and language*, I think we have abundantly proved. He adds, "And how abſurd muſt be the *idea* of that plagiariſt, "who expoſes himſelf to ſhame and detection, without the "proſpect of reaping any poetic credit, &c." But, in the careleſs haſte and heat of compoſition, theſe imitations were the involuntary and almoſt imperceptible eſcapes of a mind ſeaſoned with modern Engliſh poetry. Milles's ROWLEY, p. 245.

His

His file has worn what it poliſhed. The ſtory of old Cutler's only pair of ſtockings, I am afraid, will be here inverted: they were originally of ſilk, but by being often mended with worſted, at laſt became entirely a pair of worſted ſtockings. In the preſent caſe, we will ſuppoſe, we have a pair of good plain ſtockings, originally worſted, which by being carefully darned with ſilk, are abſolutely converted into a very decent pair of ſilk ſtockings. If a portrait by Hans Holbein was to be retouched, or rather repainted, by Reynolds, it would undoubtedly be made a much finer picture. But it would not be a picture by Hans Holbein. If, however, the poetry before us ſhould have been only corrected or interpolated by parts, I believe there will be no difficulty in drawing the line of diſtinction between the reſpective property of Rowley and Chatterton. For ſuch corrections and interpolations will appear to conſiſt not only in words or hemiſtics, but in a ſuite of ſtanzas, in paſſages of conſiderable length, and ſuch as have been the favourites of the public, and have been diſtinguiſhed for their poetical beauties. In a word, the few flat and inſipid paſſages that remain in their original ſtate, and are the indiſputable relics of the Redcliffe-cheſt, will

will eaſily be conſigned to Rowley. Thus have we been blindly laviſhing our admiration, and waſting voluminous illuſtrations and laboured commentaries, on an antient bard of the eighteenth and not of the fifteenth century.

II. METRE. It is not my deſign to enter into a minute and technical examination of the meaſures of theſe poems. A few general obſervations will be ſufficient.

The ſtanza of old Engliſh poetry is moſt commonly formed of lines of equal feet, and conſtantly preſerves an uniform recurrence of the ſame ſyſtematic alternation of rhyme. The SONGE TO ELLA is compoſed in that devious and irregular meaſure, which has been called the Pindaric. What ſhall we think of a Pindaric ode in the reign of Edward the fourth? It is well known, that this novelty was reſerved for the capricious ambition of Cowley's muſe. The writers of the fifteenth century were not ſo fond of ſoaring. They had neither ſkill nor ſtrength for ſuch towering flights. Our learned commentator, however, always abounding in a fertility of reſource, immediately removes this difficulty, by conſidering the fire of Rowley's genius, impetuous in its career, impatient of me-

chanical reſtraint, and indulging its enthuſiaſtic excurſions in the freedom of unconfined numbers, and an unfettered proſody. He even proceeds ſo far, in ſolving this problem, as to inſinuate that Rowley might have ſeen Pindar. "That he had never ſeen or heard "of the works of Pindar, his objectors can-"not take upon them to prove[k]." Pindar was one of the Greek claſſics that emerged late, at the reſtoration of literature. He might have been known, although this does not appear, to the few Engliſh ſcholars who now travelled into Italy: but certainly not to a provincial prieſt, educated in an obſcure convent at Keinſham in Somerſetſhire, and confined to his paſtoral duties within the narrow circle of Briſtol. If the name of Pindar was at this time known in England, I ſuſpect it was ſcarcely known whether he was a Greek poet or a Greek philoſopher, whether he wrote Greek odes or Greek homilies. Is he mentioned or cited by any of Rowley's cotemporaries? So is Pythagoras and Hermes Triſmegiſtus by Chaucer. The firſt Latin verſion of Pindar was by John Lonicer, printed at Baſil in 1528. Melanchthon's tranſlation could not, I think, have

[k] Milles's ROWLEY, p. 381.

been

been ſo early. But Rowley was above Latin verſions of Greek, the refuge of a modern ſchoolboy. He was a reader of the Greek claſſics in their original, where he ſaw their genuine excellencies. He was not only acquainted with Pindar, but, as we are peremptorily aſſured by the Dean of Exeter, with Homer, with Theocritus and Moſchus [1]. If Rowley was acquainted with Pindar, he has borrowed nothing from the Theban bard, but the licentious exuberance of his lyrics.

The ſtanza of the BATTLE of HASTINGS, of the TOURNAMENT, and of the Tragedies of ELLA and GOODDWYN, conſiſts of ten lines. It is conſtructed of two quatrains rhyming alternately, and theſe are cloſed with an Alexandrine. The long ſtanza, or OTTAVA RIMA, of Chaucer, never exceeds eight lines. Lydgate's is commonly confined to ſeven, and is the ſame that is called by Gaſcoigne, a critic and poet of the decline of the ſixteenth century, RITHME ROYAL. But neither Chaucer nor Lydgate cloſe with the Alexandrine. Spenſer, with the addition of the Alexandrine, and ſome difference in the alternation of the rhymes, is the firſt that extended this ſtanza to nine lines. At

[1] Milles's ROWLEY, p. 204.

length

length Prior, who lived more than two centuries after Rowley, in his Ode on the Queen, augmented Spenſer's ſtanza with a tenth line, preſerving his Alexandrine. This laſt, of which examples have been multiplied, was our poet's model. But not only theſe improvements, if ſuch they are, of the old OTTAVA RIMA, originally uſed by Boccace, exclude the claim of antiquity from Rowley, but the unvaried and habitual exactneſs of the modulation of his final Alexandrine. Out of three or four hundred Alexandrines, hardly ten will be found that have not the pauſe after the third foot, ſo indiſpenſably eſſential to the legitimate march and juſt effect of an Alexandrine verſe, and which is among the ſtriking melodies of Dryden. As thus, in the BATTLE OF HASTINGS.

And braſte his ſylver helme,—ſo furyous was the blowe [m].

Spenſer has numerous Alexandrines without this pauſe. As thus,

Which from a ſacred fountaine welled forth alwaye [n].

Chatterton's third foot is moreover often a pure iambic, which much heightens the harmony. Had the ſuppoſed Rowley written Alexandrines, I ſuſpect he would not have

[m] B. H. ii. 300.

[n] FAIR. QU. i. 1. 34.

exceeded

exceeded Spenſer, and equalled Dryden, in the muſic of verſification.

I am perſuaded, a greater variety of metre will not be found in any modern and more voluminous miſcellany. From the ſublime irregularity of the Pindaric, and the ſtately ſolemnity of the RITHME ROYAL, our our author ſometimes deſcends to ſport in lighter ſtrains. The deſultory genius of Rowley diſdained the dull identity, not only of a beaten but of a common track.

In the TRAGEDY OF ELLA, we have an ode, of which this is one of the ſtanzas.

Mie huſbande, lorde Thomas, a forreſter boulde,
As ever clove pynne, or the baſkette,
Does no cheryſauncys from Elynoure houlde,
I have ytte as ſoon as I aſke ytte.

In Durfey's *Pills to purge Melancholy*, or ſome other book of *Pills* for the ſame ſalutary purpoſe, I remember an old Somerſetſhire ballad, yet certainly not older than the latter end of the laſt century, which exhibits, I believe for the firſt time, the ſame ſtructure of ſtanza.

Go find out the vicar of Taunton Dean,
And he'll tell you the Banns they were aſked,
A thumping fat Capon he had for his pains,
And I ſkewer'd her up in a baſket.

In

The old Chaucerian word *Cheriſauncey*, in Chatterton's ſtanza, never danced ſo gaily before. But it is not ſo much to the movement, as to the double rhymes, that I here object.

There are I confeſs ſome double rhymes in Chaucer's ROMANT OF THE ROSE, but they are accidental, and they were ſuggeſted by correſpondent French words and couplets in the French original. In our preſent inſtance, the double rhyme is conſtitutive of a peculiar conformation of ſtanza, of which it is one of the eſſential properties. An ode was to be written with a regular and impoſed return of this duplication. To ſay nothing in the mean time, that Chatterton took, perhaps imperceptibly, the two words here employed for double rhymes, from the ballad I have cited. The double rhyme is now adapted to the comic and familiar ſtyle: and the unexpected conſonancy often gives an air of burleſque. Not one example occurs in Chaucer's burleſque poem of SIR THOPAS. Nor was it ſcarcely ever uſed under any circumſtances by the elder poets, except in tranſlation.

Another metrical objection to be made to the authenticity of theſe poems, is the truth of accent, or legitimacy of cadence, which uniformly marks the termination of the lines. Our author never offends the ear by the uſe

of

of words at the end of his verſes, which would produce an improper ſtreſs on final ſyllables. This is a common and characteriſtical fault of the verſification of the old poets. But the writer of theſe pieces had been evidently trained to another texture and tone of verſe. The ſudden and abundant importation of Latin and exotic words into our language, by Chaucer and his immediate ſucceſſors or followers, filled our ſtyle with pollyſyllabic terms. Theſe ſometimes of courſe found a place at the end of a line. There was however ſome degree of affectation in the caſe, occaſioned by our imitation of the Italian poets: and the polyſyllabic cloſe continued even below Fairfax. Lydgate, Rowley's cotemporary, is full of this unharmonious chime. Inſtances without number might be brought from his SIEGE OF THEBES, written in couplets; but I quote one of his ſtanzas, which accidentally meets my eye in opening his LYFE OF OUR LADY.

Nowe, as meſemeth in this hie ferie [o],
That named is the Purification,
Euery man oughte to be glad and mery,
And with gode harte, and hole entencion,
Deuoutely brynge his oblacion,
And offre fyrſt the turtell of innocence,
Of very mekenes, and hartely pacience [p].

[o] Feſtival. [p] Ch. lxxxi. Sig. Gg iiii. edit. Redman, 1530. 4to.

To

To quote one of our author's ſtanzas, in exemplification of this poſition, is to quote all. The following is tranſcribed at random from the BATTLE OF HASTINGS.

Next Sire du Moulin fell upon the grounde,
Quite through his throte the lethal javlyn preſte,
His ſoule and bloude came rouſhyng from the wounde:
He clos'd his eyen, and op'd them with the bleſte.
It can no be I ſhould behight the reſt,
That by the myghtie arme of Alfwolde felle,
Paſt by a penne to be count or expreſte,
How many Alfwolde ſent to heaven or helle;
As leaves from trees ſhook by derne Autumns hand,
So laie the Normannes ſlain by Alfwold on the ſtrand [q].

Let ut here be blind, if we can, to diſſimilarities reſulting from other particulars, and fix our attention only on the fall of the verſes, in both poets. How totally diſtant are the two ſtanzas, in this ſingle circumſtance alone of rythmical harmony!

Yet Mr. Bryant obſerves on this point, "Is there any thing extraordinary in a perſon "of a good ear and taſte, deviating from this "manner of compoſition, and following bet-"ter examples?" But goodneſs of taſte and of ear are, both, relative terms. Our learned mythologiſt then proceeds, to ſhelter

[q] B. H. ii. 351,

Rowley's

Rowley's legitimate terminations under the example of Robert of Glouceſter, a much more antient bard, who cloſes his verſes with a due ſtability of pronunciation, and is free from this unnatural and unpleaſing emphaſis. "Robert of Glouceſter was no poet, but a "mere verſifyer: yet he had taſte enough to "be ſometimes cautious about the polyſylla-"bic cloſure. It is to be found oftener in "ten lines of Lydgate, Gower, and even of "Spenſer, than in an hundred of this writer. "Hence we may perceive, that this mode of "proceeding in Rowley was not new[r]." But, with ſubmiſſion to Mr. Bryant's great judgment, I apprehend it was not that Robert of Glouceſter had *taſte* enough to avoid this defect. It was not from deſign or choice. He wrote his Chronicle at a time, when our language conſiſted almoſt entirely of monoſyllables, and before its purity, or ſimplicity, was marred by the influx of a foreign phraſeology. His words are all Teutonic or radical: and frequently for twenty lines together he does not afford five diſſyllables. Surely the quick-ſighted Rowley, who anticipated the beauties of future ages, and of poets yet unborn, would not have gone two

[r] Observations upon Rowley's Poems, p. 446, 447.

centuries backward for a model. He would rather have acquieſced in this laxity of the polyſyllabic termination, which was undoubtedly now deemed a faſhionable ornament, and an elegant departure from the plain monotonies of the primitive rhymers.

III. Antient Language. The antient language of theſe poems is affected and unnatural. Antiquated expreſſions are engrafted on preſent modes of ſpeech. "Old Ed-"ward's armour beams on Cibber's breaſt." Sometimes a modern ſtyle predominates, to the excluſion of the antient: and the tinſel of a poliſhed phraſeology is but thinly tinged with the ruſt of antiquity. The diction and verſification are at perpetual variance. Our author is ſmooth and mellifluous as Pope and Maſon, and yet more obſcure and inexplicable than Gower or Chaucer. He has given a hardneſs and a ſtiffneſs even to obſolete language. He ſays, in ſpeaking of the antient builders at Briſtol,

And eche dygne builder dequac'd onn mie mynde [s].

That is, "Each illuſtrious buider daſhed "upon my mind." The concluſion muſt be,

[s] St. C. 38.

that

that he borrowed his language from gloſſaries and etymological Engliſh lexicons, and not from life or practice. But he borrowed without ſelection or diſcernment. He ſeems to have been perſuaded, that no other ingredient was neceſſary for his fiction than old words: and careleſs or ignorant of the application, which required the niceſt conduct and caution, he preſumed he hád accompliſhed his deſign, by introducing as many antient terms, and of any antiquity, as he could collect. He viewed antient language as all of one age and one diſtrict. In dictionaries of old Engliſh, he ſaw words detached and ſeparated from their context: theſe he ſeized and combined with others, without conſidering their relative or other accidental ſignification. Here too, he found the peculiarities of northern and ſouthern dialects, thrown together for general explanation: theſe he careleſsly blended, not obſerving their reſpective local appropriations. This confuſion has been increaſed by miſpellings, proceeding either from choice, ignorance, or accident, and by inflections at once ungrammatical and arbitrary. Thus has he fabricated a factitious antient diction, at once obſolete and heterogeneous, anomalous in every reſpect, ſuch as never could have been in uſe at any era of

antiquity, is not tranſmitted by any antient Engliſh author, and moſt certainly would have been almoſt as little underſtood three centuries ago, as at preſent. Thus has he produced ſuch a ſyſtem of language, ſuch a diſcordant tiſſue of words of diſtant provinces and diſtant periods, as never before coexiſted. Again, this motley mixture of the modes of antient language being worked into a modern ground, has compounded ſuch a *paſticcio* of ſtyle, as is ſtill more unexampled and extravagant.

Mr. Bryant has this fundamental poſition. "One of the firſt poſitions which I muſt lay "down, is, that theſe poems were written "in a *provincial* dialect: according to the "idiom of the people in whoſe country the "author reſided, and was probably born [t]." How did it happen, that Rowley, who is afterwards ſaid by Mr. Bryant to have been of Somerſetſhire [u], ſhould at once ſhake off his provincial habits of ſpeech, his native peculiarities of pronuntiation, his barbarous dialect, and uncouth phraſes, and write ſo clear ſo intelligible a poem as SIR CHARLES BAWDIN?

Yet of this poem the Dean obſerves, that

[t] OBSERVATIONS, p. 1. [u] Ibid. p. 10.

the

the modern complexion of the language and metre, " may be accounted for from the na-
" ture of the ſubject, the clearneſs of the
" author's imagination, and from the harmo-
" ny of his ear. Every judicious poet will
" adapt his language to the ſtyle of poetry in
" which he writes; and it may be obſerved,
" that Rowley has cloſely followed the ad-
" vice of Horace, in the magnificent words,
" and *compound epithets*, which appear ſo
" frequently in his epic and dramatic pieces.
" And, on the other hand, with what eaſe
" and ſmoothneſs does his language flow in
" the Songs and Eclogues! How plain and
" familiar is the ſtile of this poem! How
" ſuitable to that of all the antient Ballads
" which relate ſuch dolefull events[w]!"

To ſay nothing, that ſtyle and language are here confounded, and that no other poet of Rowley's age has ever followed Horace's advice concerning compound epithets, I will allow, that every judicious writer will adapt his language to his ſpecies of poetry. But if Mr. Bryant's ſuppoſition be true, Rowley, whatever his judgement or even his genius might have been, had no choice of language. He poſſeſſed not the means nor the powers

[w] Milles's ROWLEY, p. 324.

of

of this adaptation. Neither nature of ſubject, clearneſs of imagination, nor harmony of ear, could have operated on a writer under the dominion of the Somerſetſhire dialect, and living in the fifteenth century. His dramas, epics, odes, and paſtorals, muſt have been all equally and uniformly provincial. Had Robert of Glouceſter ever choſe to deviate into any of theſe varieties of compoſition, I preſume his language would have been juſt as rough as it appears at preſent in his metrical hiſtory. As to the familiarity which doctor Milles aſſigns to the ballad-ſtyle, and in which SIR CHARLES BAWDIN is ſuppoſed to be written, that circumſtance muſt have added greatly to the provinciality, and conſequently to the unintelligibility, of the poem. I omit other poems, nor do I repeat circumſtances already mentioned, which alike tend to demonſtrate, that the idea of founding the difficulties or the ſingularities of Rowley's language on the anomalies of any provincial dialect, is improbable and indefenſible.

Mr. Bryant ſuppoſes, that Chatterton has ſhewn a want of knowledge in writing or explaining the old words of theſe poems, and therefore concludes, he was not the compoſer but only the tranſcriber. I will examine this

this part of his argument in a few inſtances. Nor is it my intention to inſtitute a formal and ſcientific diſquiſition on Rowley's language, which I leave to the learning, the preciſion, and dexterity, of Mr. Tyrwhit. I only mean to give a general ſpecimen of the futile principles on which this very plauſible plea has been conducted, and to ſhew how eaſily it may be confuted.

Mie Parker's Grange far ſpreadynge to the ſyghte, is interpreted by Chatterton, "Liberty "of paſture given to the parker [x]." This, Mr. Bryant ſays, is not a grange. It is moreover objected, that a farmer, by whom the words are ſpoken, could not have a *park*, nor keep a *parker*. Mr. Bryant therefore determines, with ſufficient latitude of conjecture, that Chatterton in the manuſcript miſtook *parker* for *parklich*, or *parklike*. Of *Grange*, a word, by the way, not quite obſolete, and occurring in Shakeſpeare, Chatterton gave a vague unpreciſe explanation from his own head, or from imperfect remembrance. As to *parker*, it is eaſy by the force of ingenious gueſſes to make ſenſe out of nonſenſe. But I know not that the ſubſtitution of *parklich* will much mend the ſenſe. Mr. Bryant's

[x] Observations, p. 35.

explanation

explanation is, " A grange, or granary, of " great extent, fenced about like a park." How was this encloſed granary, *far ſpreedynge to the ſyghte?* Here is certainly a ſtrong proof of Chatterton's ignorance, but not of ignorance in tranſcribing. He threw together, and then explained, antient words at random. The whole, to adopt the deciſion of the learned objector, " is a *boyiſh* miſtake." Chatterton had no other originals before him but his own genuine compoſitions: which having duely ſeaſoned with a quantity of obſolete terms haſtily or unſkilfully collected, he afterwards interpreted, as he could, in as careleſs a gloſſary.

In the SECOND ECLOGUE we have theſe lines,

> The gule-depeyncted oares from the black tyde,
> Decorn with fonnes [y] rare, doe ſhemrynge riſe [z].

Here Mr. Bryant infers from the ſilence of the *tranſcriber* Chatterton, that he abſurdly ſuppoſed " *Oars* to be that inſtrument by

[y] Ver. 13.

[z] *Fancied* ornaments, according to doctor Milles. Who hence takes occaſion to ſay, that " Doctor Johnſon had no " reaſon to call FUN a *low cant word*, it being of great *anti-* " *quity*, and *eſtabliſhed* ſignification." Milles's ROWLEY, p. 494.

which

" which boats are rowed." He adds, " Now " oars may indeed be painted, but I ſhould " think never with any rare deſigns." I am partly of the ſame opinion. But who can account for the licentiouſneſs of fancy? Our learned mythologiſt then endeavours to prove, from Nonius Marcellus, Plautus, and Aulus Gellius, that *Oar* here ſignifies *Wherry*. " The name *wherry* is very ancient; and by " the Romans was expreſſed *Horia* [a]." I believe the ſilence of Chatterton may be eaſily accounted for. *Oar* in the preſent acceptation, ſeems to me to give the moſt natural, conſiſtent, and moſt poetical ſenſe of the context. Chatterton is here made a tranſcriber, becauſe he does not explain a common word. I will allow that he knew nothing of this remote and primitive ſignification of *Oar*.

It is inſinuated, that Chatterton miſtook his author Rowley, becauſe he interprets PARAMENTS by *princely robes*, and, in another place, *robes of ſcarlet*. The annotator proves, that PARAMENT is a *throne of inveſtiture*, from Du Cange, and Hincmarus Rhemenſis[b]. The word occurs twice in Chaucer, and nearly in Chatterton's ſenſe.

[a] OBSERVATIONS, p. 44. ſeq.

[b] Bryant's OBSERVATIONS, p. 293.

In the LEGENDE of DIDO, Eneas is conducted,

> To daunſing chambers, full of PARAMENTS
> Of riche beddis and of ornaments [c].

Again, in the SQUIERS TALE, where king Cambuſcan goes from his throne in the Hall to a chamber richly decorated, or ſtate-room.

> Roſe from his borde there as he ſate full hie;
> Beforne him goith the loude minſtralſie,
> Till thei came to his chambre of paramentes [d].

But Chatterton, if not from Skinner, took the word immediately from Speght's gloſſary to Chaucer, where it is interpreted thus, "PARAMENTS. Robes of ſtate." Our ſuppoſed tranſcriber of antient originals, often poached in Speght's gloſſary, for old words, to ſtiffen his modern poetry. This was certainly one of the *originals* from which he *tranſcribed*. We are informed, that Chatterton's gloſſary of Speght's Chaucer, interlined with Chatterton's own hand, is in the poſſeſſion of a gentleman of Cambridge. As none of the interlineations have tranſpired, we may ſuſpect on which ſide of the queſtion they would throw moſt light. Mr. Bryant adds, "The word occurs in two different

[c] Edit. URR. p. 346. v. 181.
[d] Edit. URR. p. 61. v. 289.

"accep-

" acceptations, of which the *tranſcriber* was " not aware." Both ſenſes are from Speght. Chatterton explains one in Speght's own words, as we have ſeen. This word is omitted in Mr. Tyrwhit's excellent gloſſary [e].

Chatterton is called a tranſcriber, for miſinterpreting BREME, *ſtrong* [f]. A fleet of ſhips is called *breme* [g]. But this is a kindred ſenſe to Speght's interpretation, *fierce*. Is the concluſion here juſt, that Chatterton explained what he did not underſtand? That he was the copier and not the poet? If an old word would bear a ſimilar or ſecondary meaning, he adopted it, and explained it accordingly. Nor was he, otherwiſe, ſtudious of exact interpretation [h].

In the TOURNAMENT the poet ſays, that William the Conqueror's paſſage through a dark foreſt was oppoſed by toads and adders.

The *lordynge* toade ynn all hys paſſes bides, &c [i].

[e] See Cotgrave, in V.

[f] Bryant's OBSERVATIONS, p. 115.

[g] ECL. ii. 6.

[h] I will here give an inſtance of the uſe of *Breme*, never yet adduced. Leland ſpeaking of a Caſtle in Fulbroke-park near Warwick, ſays, " This caſtell ſtoode *bremlye* in the ſight " of Warwyke caſtle, and was a cawſe of hart-brineynge." That is, *conſpicuouſly, full in ſyght*. " It ſtared Warwick- " caſtle in the face." ITIN. vol. viii. 11, fol. 74. b.

[i] T. 56.

Lordynge is explained by Chatterton, *the toad ſtanding on its hind legs*. This was one of the horrid impediments of the uſurper's progreſs. And the exaggeration is very poetical. But Mr. Bryant infers, that here is another groſs miſtake of the tranſcriber. "Who, ſays he, ever ſaw a toad in this "ſtrange attitude [k] ?" Perhaps nobody but a poet. This wonderful and unnatural appearance is imagined, to heighten the terrours of the ſcene. The annotator then adds the *true* interpretation, as if from Rowley himſelf. "By *lordyng* is ſignified, *dull* and *heavy*." And he inſinuates that Rowley might write *lourdan*. If Chatterton is here only the tranſcriber and interpreter of Rowley, he has certainly introduced a beauty not intended in his original. The context ſhews that our youth is right; and that he here, as in other places, perfectly underſtood his own meaning and his own poetry. All theſe loathſom animals are repreſented as rouſed, and in action, to ſtop the king. The owl flaps her wing: the adders leap forward and dart their ſtings: and the toad, in a poſture not conſiſtent with his uſual ſluggiſhneſs, appears in every path. In ſome picture of the

[k] Observations, p. 283.

the

temptation of Saint Antony, I think I have ſeen a toad in this ſhape. But it is not from the painters that we are to convict Chatterton of plagiraiſm. He ſtudied the modern poets.

A wild devious courſe of a river is called *biſmare*. Chatterton's interpretation is, *bewildered, curious*. "Theſe epithets, ſays "Mr. Bryant, he couples together, as if "they were ſynonimous: but they neither "of them convey the true meaning [l]." At leaſt, they convey Chatterton's meaning. Had Chatterton, continues the critic, "been "the author of theſe compoſitions, he would "have introduced the word in the ſame ac-"ceptation in which it is to be found in "Chaucer [m]." But Chatterton did not read our old poets for a hard word: he conſulted their gloſſariſts, a more commodious ſort of writers. In his old friend Speght he ſaw, "BISMARE. fantaſticall ſtrangeneſſe." Chaucer's context, which he did not think it neceſſary to examine, and in which he could not have eaſily found the word, would have ſhewn him that Speght and his author did not always agree.

Courage is ſaid to be "*knopped* in the froſt

[l] OBSERVATIONS, p. 65. [m] Ibid. p. 67.

"of

"of feare [n]." That is, ſays Chatterton, *chained, faſtened, congealed.* Mr. Bryant obſerves, that the "tranſcriber has neither "expreſſed, nor explained, *knopped*, truly [o]." As to impropriety of expreſſion, this is propoſed to be removed by reading *nipped.* But a better is not always a right reading. As to explanation, here is another and a glaring proof that he conſulted gloſſaries and not authors. Had he ſeen the word in Chaucer's text, he would have there found that *Knopped* ſignified "faſtened, or tied "with a button [p]." This would have been too familiar an idea. But he looked no further than Speght, who gives only the general unappropriated ſenſe. This Chatterton extended to a metaphor. When he wanted an old word, he did not always chuſe the beſt.

When the chriſtian fleet approaches the holy land, it is ſaid

The amenuſed nationnes be aſtoun [q].

Here again he has recourſe to Speght, and interprets AMENUSED, *diminiſhed.* Mr. Bryant affirms, that the word is not truly expreſſed or copied, but ought to be *amanſed*,

[n] E. M. 15.
[o] OBSERVATIONS, p. 58.
[p] ROM. ROSE. v. 7212.
[q] ECL. ii. 5.

that

that is *accurſed*[r]. A commentator ſometimes writes better than his poet. In another place the word is uſed and explained in the very ſame acceptation[s]. Undoubtedly, in the preſent inſtance, the Saracens might be more properly called *acurſed*, than *diminiſhed*. But AMENUSED was too ſtately a participle or epithet to be paſſed over. It fitted a place in his verſe, and he had little farther anxiety about it. He truſted it to chance. His readers might, or might not, attend to preciſe propriety of ſignification. On the ſame thoughtleſs principle, and inattentive to future examination or detection, he manifeſtly forged many old words, which paſs as antient current coin in doctor Milles's Gloſſary to Rowley, entitled, A GLOSSARY OF UNCOMMON WORDS.

But the moſt ſpecious and boaſted inſtance of miſconception and falſe tranſcription lies in the following line.

Couldſte thou not kenn, moſt ſkyll'd, After la goure[t].

Here ſays Mr. Bryant, "the word *aſtrologer* "uſed ſometimes to be expreſſed *After-* "*lagour*: and ſo it ſeems to have occurred "here. He was ſo ignorant as to read it

[r] OBSERVATIONS, p. 111.
[s] L. M. C. 28.
[t] B. H. ii. 143.

"*After*

" *After la gour :* and he has abſolutely dis-
" joined the conſtituent parts, and taken it
" for a proper name, the name of a Norman
" of ſome conſequence. He accordingly
" forgets the real perſon ſpoken of, and
" addreſſes this After La Gour as a perſon of
" *ſcience.*

Couldſte thou not *kenne*, moſt *ſkyll'd* After la gour ?

" He thought it was analagous to Delacour,
" Delamere, &c [u]." But I do not remember, that *Afterlagour* was ever uſed for *Aſtrologer*. The word occurs once, and but once, in Chaucer, where it ſignifies the old aſtronomical inſtrument called an *Aſtrolabe*.

His ASTERLAGOUR longing for [to] his art,
His augrim ſtonis, &c [w].

The learned Rowley muſt have known better, than to have called an Aſtrologer by the name of one of his inſtruments. The truth of the matter is this. Chatterton, in Speght's Gloſſary, found " ASTERLAGOUR. " an Aſtrolabe." He wanted a hard word for Aſtrologer, for which he uſed *Afterlagour*, I will not ſay whether by deſign or inadvertency. Afterwards, perhaps in writing over the poem, and deſerting or forgetting his firſt

[u] OBSERVATIONS, p. 155.
[w] MILL. T. edit. Urr. p. 25. v. 111.

mean-

meaning, he wantonly and very inconſiderately corrupted the word into *After la gour*. Or accidentally looking back into Speght, and finding he had miſtaken Speght's interpretation, thought of this bungling artifice to make all right. Thus much is certain, that Rowley, the pretended compoſer of theſe poems, could not poſſibly have uſed *Afterlagour*, the word ſuppoſed to have been in the original manuſcript, in the ſenſe here required. He never could have confounded the artiſt with his machine, then well known by this appellation. On the whole, I leave the concluſion to the unprejudiced reader.

That Chatterton was no tranſcriber, that he neither miſunderſtood nor miſinterpreted antient originals, that he had recourſe to gloſſaries either to accumulate a ſtock of old words, or in order to ſubſtitute old in the place of his own new words, that he ſometimes haſtily copied, imperfectly remembered, frequently miſapprehended, and often ſuperficially or caſually inſpected thoſe gloſſaries, that he occaſionally fabricated difficult words, in ſhort, that he compoſed both poems and explanations, is I hope ſufficiently clear, from this ſhort ſketch of an argument, which forms ſo conſiderable a part of Mr. Bryant's very learned vindication of

Rowley. Chatterton conſulted theſe helps, not to elucidate the obſolete phraſes of an antient writer, but to give his own performances the ſtamp of antiquity: to darken his own meaning, not to illuſtrate the obſcurities of others. Let us add to his negligence or inexperience, that the gloſſaries he poſſeſſed were often erroneous or incomplete. What he could not find, he made: and often miſtook or miſrepreſented what he found. He ſometimes omits to explain his old words: but it is well known, that his poetry and his interpretation were not always written at the ſame time. Many of his marginal comments were extemporaneous productions at the requeſt of friends. Nor did he always retain the exact ſignification in which he had firſt uſed an old word. Thus was he frequently compelled to depend upon confuſed recollection, or uncertain conjecture. Thus his explanations are often licentious, or inadequate.

Mr. Bryant frequently repeats an axiom, that every author muſt know his own meaning. This may be true. But every forger of old poetry does not always know the meaning of other men: that is, he does not always exactly know, either the meaning, or the proper application, of all the antique words

words which he finds it neceſſary to adopt. Chatterton, however, knew his original and primary meaning. But writing under the conſtraint and the difficulties of a forgery which conſiſted in the uſe of a remote and unfamiliar language, his natural expreſſion was obſtructed. What moſt writers wiſh to attain, he was compelled to avoid, perſpicuity. He was obliged to embarraſs a meaning, at firſt clear. And this he practiced with too little care and judgement. He underſtood what he wrote, but he could not always explain what he wrote. What he had written, he was afterwards forced to render unintelligible. And in this proceſs, not always managed with ſufficient addreſs, he ſometimes puzzled both himſelf and his readers.

Mr. Bryant cloſes his volume with the following illuſtration. "Whoever brings a "copy of a prior writing, and does not un- "derſtand that writing, that perſon cannot "be the author. In ſhort, if a boy pro- "duces a reputable exerciſe, and cannot "conſtrue it, there is not an uſher at a "boarding-ſchool but will tell him he did "not make it[x]." But if a maſter was to

[x] Observations, p. 585.

order a ſcholar, to bring an exerciſe, written in Chaucer's ſtyle, and the boy, not having a competent knowledge of old Engliſh, could not afterwards very readily explain his taſk, the maſter would not tell him that he did not make it becauſe he could not explain it, but would blame him for his unſkilful uſe of Chaucer's language, and direct him to ſtudy it with more attention.

IV. HISTORICAL ALLUSIONS. Theſe poems are ſuppoſed to contain a fund of references to curious hiſtorical facts now forgotten. Mr. Bryant aſſerts, that, "they "abound with abſtruſe learning, and with "continual references to antient hiſtory [y]." Again, "There are ſtrong marks of origina- "lity, with numberleſs curious alluſions, "with references to paſt hiſtories, which are "many times irretrievable. — Theſe poems "are too refined and curious, and relate to "circumſtances too remote and obſcure to "have proceeded from the young man, to "whom the poems have by many been "aſcribed [z]."

It is aſked, how Chatterton could have gained a knowledge of the raven-ſtandard of

[y] OBSERVATIONS, p. 480. [z] Ibid. p. 221, 261.

the

the Danes, or that the raven was revered by that people? We have theſe inſtances, in the Tragedy of ELLA, a Daniſh ſtory.

The Danes, wythe terroure rulynge at their hedde,
Threw downe their banner talle, and lyche a raven fledde [a].

Again, the Daniſh ſoldiers ſay,

Onne, Ella, onn, we long for bloodie fraie,
We longe to heare the Raven, &c [b].

And the Daniſh leader Ella ſays,

Thanne, whanne the Ravenn croakes uponne the playne,
Oh lette ytt be the knelle to myghtie Dacians ſlayne [c].

And the Chorus ſays,

Harke the Ravenne flaps hys wing [d].

Mr. Bryant ſuppoſes, that this piece of recondite Northern mythology was inacceſſibly ſhut up in Spelman, Aſſer, the Saxon Chronicle, Pontanus, and Olaus Wormius [e]." But Chatterton ſeems to have had his intelligence from Thomſon's MASQUE OF ALFRED, a common play-book, where the Raven-ſtandard of the Danes is thus poetically deſcribed.

—— —— Is not yon pictur'd raven
Their famous magic ſtandard? Emblem fit
To ſpeak the ſavage genius of the people.——

[a] Ver. 793. [b] Ibid. 664. [c] Ibid. 641.
[d] Ibid. 865. [e] OBSERVATIONS, p. 188. ſeq.

'Tis

—— —— 'Tis the ſame.
Wrought by the ſiſters of the Daniſh king,
Of furious Ivar, in a midnight hour:
While the ſick moon, at their enchanted ſong,
Wrapt in pale tempeſt, labour'd through the clouds:
The demons of deſtruction then, they ſay,
Were all abroad, and mixing with their woof
Their baleful power: the ſiſters ever ſung,
"Shake, ſtandard, ſhake this ruin on our foes[f]!"

And the Hermit ſays,

The raven droops his wing — and, hark! the trumpet,
&c[g].

Let me add, that Chatterton's idea of writing a play on a Daniſh ſtory might have been ſuggeſted by this very Maſque. He is allowed to have been a reader of Thomſon. It is alſo to be obſerved, that both dramas are built on the ſame point of the Daniſh hiſtory in England, the Landing of the Danes in Somerſetſhire. One of Chatterton's perſons is Hurra. Mr. Bryant ſays, that the proper name HUBBA might by an *unexperienced tranſcriber* be eaſily taken for HURRA[h]. It is very true, that Hubba is the right reading, as Chatterton well knew from theſe lines in his favourite Thomſon's Maſque.

The valiant HUBBA bites the bloody field,
With twice ſix hundred Danes around him ſtrow'd[i].

[f] Sc. iv. [g] Ibid. Sc. iii. [h] Ubi ſupr. p. 175.
[i] Sc. iv.

Chatter-

Chatterton, I preſume, might have his reaſons for converting Hubba into HURRA.

In theſe poems, Ella is called the warden of Briſtol caſtle, in the Daniſh wars. But before the Conqueſt, Briſtol was a very inconſiderable place. It is never once mentioned in our hiſtories of thoſe bloody engagements, which were fought all about its neighbourhood between the Saxons and Danes. It did not begin to flouriſh or to be fortified, till after the total extinction of the Anglo-Saxon government. The firſt notice of its caſtle is, under the year 1087 [k], in the Saxon Chronicle: which is ſaid by Robert of Glouceſter, to have been built by Robert Rufus earl of Glouceſter. This muſt have been about the reign of Rufus. That chronicler ſays, that earl Robert not only founded the caſtle, but adorned it with a noble tower, "which of all the tours of Englonde "ys yhelde the flour [l]." In ſhort, it was one of thoſe new fortreſſes of the eleventh century, which it was the policy of the Normans, at their acceſſion, to erect in various parts of England, for the ſecurity of their dubious title. Had this caſtle actually ex-

[k] Sub. ann. p. 193. 20.

[l] Chron. p. 43. edit. Hearne.

iſted

exiſted as a ſtrong weſtern garriſon under the wardenſhip of our hero Ella, and of ſufficient conſequence to have made a ſtout reſiſtance againſt the incurſions of the Danes, it muſt have been mentioned long before by the monkiſh hiſtorians. More eſpecially as they record minutely, many conſiderable conflicts with the Daniſh invaders in Somerſetſhire. Why then is Briſtol, with its caſtle, omitted? I fear we ſhall find no other accounts of Ella's invincible proweſs againſt the Danes in the ninth century, at or near Briſtol, than what are recorded in Chatterton's unpubliſhed Hiſtory of Briſtol, by the monk Turgott, a manuſcript of equal authenticity with his TRAGEDY OF ELLA. Mr. Bryant concludes, that Briſtol was a place of celebrity even before the time of king Athelſtan: becauſe Robert of Glouceſter points out Pucklechurch, the place where king Edward, Athelſtan's brother, was ſlain, by its being in the vicinity of Briſtol. But Robert of Glouceſter, who wrote about 1200, in pointing out an obſcure village, refers to the neighbouring town of Briſtol, as being then of ſufficient and diſtinguiſhed note. It by no means follows, that Briſtol was a place of note, when that event happened [m].

[m] Ubi ſupr. p. 201. Rob. Glouc. p. 277.

The

The eyes of Power in GOODWYN, and the armour of king Richard, are compared to fiery *gronfires*, or ground-fires [n]. Mr. Bryant obſerves, that "ſomething is alluded "to which was of a very fearfull nature, and "uncommon appearance." He ſuppoſes the alluſion to be, to the many fiery eruptions from the earth, which appeared in England during the time of earl Godwyn, and are recorded by Bromton and other early annaliſts. "What have we ſimilar, ſays he, by "which theſe deſcriptions can be explained? "Nothing, that I am appriſed of, now a "days [o]." But of equal antiquity, and ſtill continuing to appear, are the formidable nocturnal meteors in moraſſes, commonly called *Will of the wiſp*, and *Jack a lantern*. From Skinner Chatterton learned, that *Gron* was a marſh, or rather a ditch. He added *fire*, and dignified what every child knows, with a difficult and a pompous name.

It is ſaid, that many circumſtances mentioned in theſe pieces relating to the antiquities of churches and other buildings at Briſtol, and not elſewhere to be found, have been verified. I will not deny, that Chatterton might diſcover parchments of humble

[n] T. E. 200. ECL. ii. 45. [o] OBSERVATIONS, p. 208.

 proſe,

proſe, containing local memoirs, and authentic deeds illuſtrating the hiſtory of Briſtol. He might have diſcovered biographical diaries, or other notices, of the lives of Cannynge, Iſcham and Gorges. Of the three laſt, who were poets as well as Rowley, various anecdotes are come to light. And the dean of Exeter ſeems to ſpeak with rapture of the feſtive party which theſe four poets muſt have formed. "When we view "Canning, accompanied with theſe three "poets, whoſe agreeable converſation he has "celebrated in the ACCOUNT OF THE "FEAST, can we forbear drawing the pa-"rallel between this party, and that of Me-"cenas, with his three friends, Virgil, "Horace, and Varius, united by the ſimilar "ties of friendſhip, genius, and poetry? "The compariſon, however, will be much "to the advantage of Mr. Canning, who "not only equalled Mecenas in liberality, "and in the patronage of literature, but was "alſo a better man, and a better poet [p]." I own, I think the dean has carried the parallel rather too far. But every man has his favourite authors. Yet that this worthy mayor of Briſtol was a better man than

[p] Milles's ROWLEY, p. 191.

Mecenas,

Mecenas, I will not diſpute. I think however, it may be doubted, whether Canynge was a better poet than Mecenas. If ſome of Mecenas's poetry had been luckily recovered in the Redcliffe repoſitory with Rowley's and Canynge's, this point might have been decided.

We are told, that many of the incidents in the BATTLE OF HASTINGS, ſuch as the licentiouſneſs of the Engliſh army, and the exact diſcipline of the Norman on the night of the battle, Harold's exploration of the Norman camp, and the reception of his ſpies of by duke William, Girtha's miſtake that the Norman ſoldiers were prieſts diſguiſed in armour, with other circumſtances, are entirely conformable to the deſcription of this battle in Malmeſbury, and the reſt of the old Latin chroniclers [q]. To ſuch authors Chatterton could not have had acceſs. But all theſe particulars, which are repreſented as myſteries, may be ſeen in Hollinſhead, who tranſlated and incorporated theſe authors in his voluminous and circumſtantial hiſtory of England. From thence they have deſcended into ſome later hiſtorians. I do not particularly recollect in Hollinſhead, nor am I

[q] See Milles's Rowley, pp. 98. 100. 111. etc.

inclined to ſearch in that vaſt ocean of black letter, whether he has mentioned Rowland's Songe, with which William in our author begins the battle[r]. But Chatterton had certainly ſeen the three elegant volumes of antient ballads. In this poem of the Battle of Hastings, the firſt writer, ſuppoſed to be Turgott a cotemporary, is ſaid by doctor Milles to have "pointed out "the origin and uſe of Stonehenge, ſo little "known by our antient writers[s]." But what origin, and what uſes, are here pointed out, that do not appear in modern books? And it is to be obſerved, that the writer has aſſigned almoſt every origin, and every uſe, which modern conjectures, or antient hiſtorians, have given. This is what Turgott probably would not, or rather could not, have done. Our poet, however, ſeems moſt inclined to believe, at leaſt inſinuates, that this wonderful monument was erected in conſequence of Hengiſt's maſſacre. I am happy to find this aſſignation of Stonehenge, which I curſorily hazarded in my firſt volume of the Hiſtory of Engliſh poetry, aſcertained by ſo authentic an hiſtorian as Turgott! Yet at the ſame time, he ſuppoſes, that it might have

[r] B. H. ii. 232. [s] See Milles's Rowley, p. 71. ſeq.

been

been a Druidical temple. And this ſuppoſition I afterwards inſtanced as a proof of Chatterton's forgery, obſerving, that the notion, that "the Druids conſtructed this ſtupendous "pile for a place of worſhip, was a DIS-"COVERY reſerved for the SAGACITY of a "WISER age, and the laborious DISCUSSION "of MODERN ANTIQUARIES[t]." Here I am accuſed by doctor Milles of wavering between two opinions[u]. Who does not perceive, that this paragraph never was intended as a ſerious opinion or affirmation? I confeſs I cannot always treat the ſtrange ſyſtems of Stukeley, of which this is a famous one, with the gravity of the preſident of the antiquarian ſociety. Doctor Milles himſelf, however, is ſometimes diſpoſed to be pleaſant: for upon MY AUTHORITY, that is, this my ſecond ſuppoſed determination, he propoſes to give up my former theory about Hengiſt's maſſacre, and to remark the great improbability with which I found that theory on the evidence of the ſongs of the Saxon minſtrels. But I certainly did not mean, that the Saxon minſtrels had ever ſung a triumphal epinicion on Hengiſt's

[t] Hiſt. ENGL. POETR. ii. 155.

[u] Milles's ROWLEY, p. 76.

maſſacre.

maſſacre. It entered of courſe into their minſtrelſy as an hiſtorical event, where it was undoubtedly dreſſed up in their own favourable colours. Theſe rude ſongſters were not ſo national, and ſo nice, as we may ſuppoſe. In their metrical chronicles they recited what happened without much ſelection or ſuppreſſion. Thus it tranſpired as a piece of hiſtory from the Saxon to the Welſh bards, who by new aggravations would naturally turn it to the diſadvantage of their enemies. Too palpable therefore is the modern delicacy of the writer of the BATTLE OF HASTINGS, who thus ſqueamiſhly introduces this tale of Saxon perfidy:

I, tho a Saxon, yet the truth will telle [w].

But the learned dean's ſtrongeſt proof of a knowledge of genuine hiſtory in this poem, and by which he judges it to be moſt unqueſtionably authenticated, is the agreement of the names of the Norman warriors, with thoſe printed in our hiſtorians from the Chronicle of Normandy and the Battell-Abbey roll. "At leaſt, he adds, names ſo "nearly reſembling them, that allowing for "miſtakes of tranſcribers, and difference of "ſpelling, they may be ſatisfactorily veri-

[w] B. H. i. 312.

"fied."

" fied [x]." I draw a contrary and the moſt natural concluſion. I am of opinion that on this occaſion Chatterton uſed a book not yet mentioned, Fuller's CHURCH-HISTORY. How he could get acceſs to it, ſhall be ſhewn hereafter. In this book, all the rolls and catalogues are drawn together, from Hollinſhead, Fox, and Stowe, and comparatively arranged [y].

I cannot but here obſerve, that Chatterton could not have choſen from our hiſtory, a more commodious ſubject for a poem than the Battle of Haſtings, excluſive of its ſuſceptibility of poetical ornament, and of its coincidence with his predominant predilection for antiquarian imagery. This ſubject poſſeſſes the ſingular advantage of having the names of its heroes, on one ſide at leaſt, enumerated at large in an original cotemporary record.

Meanwhile, how comes it paſs, that ſo many of the Normans are mentioned in this poem, and ſo few of the Saxons? It is ſtrange that the original author Turgott, an

[x] Milles's ROWLEY, p. 152.

[y] Edit. Lond. 1655. Cent. xi. B. ii. p. 155. ſeq. At the end follows the Ely tablet, where is the name of Nigel a Norman knight, uſed by Chatterton, on which Mr. Bryant has expended a waſte of learned reſearch. OBS. p. 346.

Anglo-

Anglo-Saxon, ſhould not have commemorated more of his countrymen. Why does he dwell ſo largely, and almoſt ſolely, on the names of his enemies? For this plain reaſon. Chatterton had no long roll of Saxon names, to which he might refer. Of the Normans he had a liſt of eight hundred, from which he might chuſe at pleaſure. Not twenty Saxon names, including Harold's three brothers, Toſti, Girtha, and Leofwyne, known from our hiſtorians, are here recited. All theſe, however, are ſuppoſed by Mr. Bryant to be the names of Saxons "of great rank "and eminence in their time, and of large "poſſeſſions [z]. He adds, that all theſe names are to be found in Doomſday-book. Now that curious and ample record, containing the forfeitures of all the property of England at the Conqueſt, then in the poſſeſſion of Saxon lords, is abſolutely a Saxon nomenclature. I will not ſuppoſe that Chatterton had ſeen Doomſday-book. He took his few Saxon names, by memory, from plays, poems, novels, hiſtories, and other books of entertainment. Had he taken a hundred more, they would all perhaps have tallied with Doomſday-book. It would have been ex-

[z] Ut ſupr. p. 373.

traordinary

extraordinary indeed, not to have diſcovered parallels to theſe few names, in that comprehenſive repoſitory of antient hereditary property.

Mr. Bryant is of opinion, that the BATTLE OF HASTINGS contains a *maſs of occult intelligence*, in many *obſcure references*, and *dark hints*. This is a maſs which I cannot penetrate. The poem, as we have ſeen, is ſuppoſed to have been originally written by Turgott, a coeval eccleſiaſtic. But a writer ſo connected with the times, a profeſſed hiſtorian, and who was here the author of a ſeparate and diſtinct narrative of this ſingle event, muſt have treated the ſubject with minuteneſs and particularity. He was drawing from the life, and recording recent facts. This newly diſcovered manuſcript of Turgott, muſt have mentioned anecdotes not now to be found in our hiſtories, or have related thoſe already recorded, with additional circumſtances, with a leſs degree of generality, and a variety of new particulars. But unluckily, we ſee little more than the well-known, eſtabliſhed, leading incidents. Some few poetical or imaginary inſertions excepted, this memorable Battle is much the ſame in Hollinſhead as in Turgott. I am ſpeaking of real facts, ſuch as properly belong

to this event as a piece of hiſtory, and ſuch as Turgott would have naturally told. As to thoſe *occult intelligences*, inſtanced by Mr. Bryant, *Tynyan's necromancy*, the *goats of Conyan made tame*, and the ſouls of the *fairy-ſtricken* people that wander to *Offa's dyke*, they are extraneous, and the ſport of the poet. Tynyan is an old Britiſh king in Geoffrey of Monmouth. So little is known of this monarch, that he was ſafely and eaſily converted into a necromancer. The *Goats of Conyan* might be an alluſion, to amuſe and deceive, without any meaning at the bottom. We muſt not always treat fancies as myſteries. There are now remembered many romantic traditions, ſuch as that of the ſouls of the *fairy-ſtricken people*. But this might have ſprung from Chatterton's imagination, for it is by no means out of the ſtyle and caſt of modern fiction. All theſe may be ſaid to have been added to Turgott by Rowley. It is at leaſt as probable, that they came from Chatterton. They certainly did not fall from the pen of an archdeacon, a prior of an epiſcopal church, and a conſcientious annaliſt. At leaſt they would not have been introduced by Turgott into the grave dignity of an hiſtoric detail.

Mr.

Mr. Bryant juſtly obſerves, that "whoever "takes an antient piece of hiſtory for a ſub- "ject, will dwell upon the well-known "facts. He will never amuſe his reader with "dark and unſatisfactory alluſions[a]." I grant, a forger of an old hiſtorical poem, for an obvious reaſon, will dwell on the well-known facts. His additions will be thoſe of decoration only. As to *dark* and *unſatisfactory* alluſions, theſe he may ſafely hazard. They will add to the diſguiſe, and lead to no detection. He may ſafely deviate into ſuch innocent fictions as I have mentioned. In deſcribing a real battle fought nine hundred years ago, he will throw in ſuch incidents of the fortune of a field, as are of general nature, and muſt belong to every battle. He will feign or borrow, without danger of diſcovery by violating hiſtorical truth, deaths, diſtortions, and wounds, rivers of blood, and hills of ſlain, clattering of armour, and ſhowers of arrows. He may however be too cautious in attending to truth and probability, and avoid ſuch groſs miſtakes, as an antient author would not have avoided. In deſcribing a battle fought between the Normans and Saxons, he will perhaps ſay nothing of gun-

[a] Ubi ſupr. p. 404.

powder and great guns, which a celebrated author of the fifteenth century has not ſcrupled to introduce in deſcribing the Siege of Troy.

V. BATTLE OF HASTINGS, and ELLA A TRAGEDY. Theſe are two poems, which although partaking in the ſtrongeſt degree of the general marks of forgery diſcernible in all the reſt, yet as ſubject to peculiar circumſtances, I muſt conſider ſeparately.

I begin with the BATTLE OF HASTINGS. On this, reſulting from nature of ſubject, ſome ſuſpicious circumſtances neceſſarily occurred under the laſt Head of HISTORICAL ALLUSIONS. I mean now to examine it in the view of an imitation of POPE'S HOMER.

It is not denied, that this poem is copied from the Iliad. Doctor Milles, for that reaſon, has placed it firſt, in the collection: and he is of opinion that "it not only "COPIES but EXCEEDS Homer[b]."

I believe it will be difficult to prove, that Rowley had ever ſeen the Iliad, either in the original Greek, or in a proſe tranſlation. It is evident that Rowley's cotemporary Lydgate, a ſcholar, and one who might then be

[b] Milles's ROWLEY, p. 45.

called

called a general reader, was totally unacquainted with Homer. He has written profeſſedly on Homer's ſubject, the ſiege of Troy. But his author was Guido de Colonna, who turned, about the twelfth century, the ſtory of the Trojan war into a romance, not from Homer, but from Dictys Cretenſis. And this, in England at leaſt, was the faſhionable Iliad of the fifteenth century. Where had Rowley ever ſeen a copy of Homer? In the library of his convent at Keinſham, or of the Carmelites at Briſtol, where he is ſaid to have ſtudied? How had he acquired a knowledge of the Greek language? It was not at that time either taught or cultivated in England. Were Rowley's connections with any of thoſe few Engliſh ſcholars who now travelled into that country where the Greek writers were revived? The Redcliffe cheſt has given us no information of a his learned character. Surely, one who muſt have had ſo full and familiar an acquaintance with Homer, as to transfuſe his deſcriptions with ſo much eaſe and intelligence, muſt have left papers or parchments of a claſſical or a literary kind. We are told of his Saxon, but not of his Grecian manuſcripts. Nor do I conceive that Rowley could have ſeen a proſe Latin tranſlation of

the

the Iliad. Leontius Pilatus, one of the learned Conſtantinopolitan exiles, tranſlated the Iliad into Latin proſe, with part of the Odyſſey, at the deſire of Boccace, about the year 1360, as we learn from Petrarch's Epiſtles to Boccace[c]. But this was never publiſhed, and went no further than the public library of Venice[d]. The firſt proſe Latin Iliad that appeared in public, was by Laurentius Valla, and it was printed at Breſcia in Italy, in the year 1497. This came too late to have been ſeen by Rowley. We are therefore left to conclude, that an Engliſh Iliad was uſed on this occaſion. But Rowley never had ſeen the verſions by Chapman, Hobbes, or Pope. Can it now be doubted that the BATTLE OF HASTINGS was written by Chatterton?

Indeed, with regard to the purport of our main argument, it matters not, which of the three Engliſh tranſlations was uſed by Chatterton. But it is more than probable, that this general reader and imitator of our modern poets, could not have been unacquainted with POPE's HOMER. Hence the Homeric circumſtances of the BATTLE OF

[c] SENIL. Lib. ii. Cap. 5.

[d] Hody, GR. ILLUSTR. Lib. i. p. 5. ſeq.

HASTINGS.

HASTINGS. Hence the contexture of the verſification, and animation of the narrative. Hence, to change Rowley for Chatterton, and to uſe doctor Milles's forcible expreſſions, "he makes his numbers harmonious, without "weakening the force of his ideas: he is "ſonorous but not bombaſt: and can de-"ſcribe the great convulſions of nature, in "terms more majeſtic and ſignificant than "Addiſon's, *Wreck of matter, and the cruſh "of worlds* [e]."

But I lay the greateſt ſtreſs on the compariſons, that ornamental part of POPE's HOMER ſo likely to ſtrike a young mind. The dean of Exeter obſerves, "The rapi-"dity of Rowley's imagination is a ſtranger "to repoſe: the mind of the reader can "hardly have digeſted the torrent of ſimilies "on Kenelwalche's beauty, when he finds "the valour of Adhelm, celebrated by three "alluſions in the courſe of one ſtanza [f]." Who but a boy, fond of the florid and the deſcriptive, and unable to check his career of fancy, could have poured forth ſuch a torrent of indigeſtible ſimilies? His imagination, a *ſtranger to repoſe*, deſtroys even the repoſe of his readers.

[e] Milles's ROWLEY, p. 114.

[f] Ibid. p. 134.

Our

Our author compares a hero ſlain and ſtretched on the ground, to an oak juſt felled. He adds, that the oak was felled,

To live a ſecond time upon the main [g].

In Pope, the oak is only "to become a maſt "for ſome great admiral [h]." In Homer it is converted into ſhip-timber. Here, ſays doctor Milles, "the oak *living again on the* "*main*, dignifies Homer's image, which "Pope's tranſlation has weakened and de-"graded [i]." But it does not follow, that if Chatterton copied POPE'S HOMER, he therefore always uſed Pope's words or form of expreſſion. It was eaſy here, as in many more inſtances, to enliven and improve: and Chatterton has plainly done it in a line perfectly Popian. Nor has Pope here degraded Homer. At leaſt he thought there was a ſufficient dignity in words borrowed from Milton. But it is not hard to prove, that Chatterton ſometimes uſes Pope's expreſſions. Thus, for Pope's *ſilver cuiſhes* [k], we have in the BATTLE OF HASTINGS, his *Cuiſhe of ſilver* [l]. In the ſimilies, Chatterton frequently avails himſelf of Pope's rhymes. I muſt add, that the prolix circumſtantial Compariſon

[g] B. H. i. 369. [h] B. xvi. 591. [i] Ubi ſupr. p. 82.
[k] IL. B. xix. 398. [l] B. H. ii. 228.

did

did not exiſt in the fifteenth century. It was imported into our poetry by Spenſer.

I have here mentioned the ſimilies on Kenelwalche's beauty. In theſe, as we have ſeen long ago, the roſy lips, the ſnowy boſom, the melodious voice, the auburn locks and the taper arms, of the Saxon dame, are moſt luxuriantly illuſtrated. Mr. Bryant ſuppoſes, what is not held by doctor Milles, that theſe compariſons originated from Turgott. But he has himſelf ſuggeſted a conſideration which materially tends to invalidate this hypotheſis, which may be extended to Rowley, and which at laſt naturally brings home theſe high colourings of female beauty to a youth of ſtrong paſſions and warm feelings. He very juſtly remarks, that Turgott the prior of ſaint Cuthbert's convent at Durham, "expends more time in ſpeaking of "the appearance and beauty of this lady, "than is well decent for a diſciple of ſaint "Cuthbert, and one devoted to celibacy and "the cloiſter [m].

[m] OBSERVATIONS, p. 252. Of this very ungallant fraternity, Robert Grayſtanes, a monk of Durham, author of an HISTORIA DUNELMENSIS, about the year 1336, has the following anecdote, which I literally tranſlate. "In eaſter week, "1333, king Edward the third came to Durham, and was

On the whole, as Pope perpetually varies, dilates, and adorns, the ſimplicity of Homer, I perceive many paſſages which Chatterton has imitated from the Engliſh verſion, not to be traced in the Greek original. But no further inveſtigation ſeems neceſſary. I no longer argue, that the BATTLE OF HASTINGS is a forgery, becauſe Chatterton produced the firſt part as his own, and afterwards the ſecond as the work of Rowley[n]. Whether Chatterton himſelf choſe the ſubject from his fondneſs for old Engliſh manners and events, or whether really ſome hiſtorical manuſcript on the ſubject might be found among the Redcliffe parchments, he had

" entertained in the Prior's lodgings. The next evening queen " Philippa came in one day from Knareſburgh to Durham: " and not knowing the cuſtom of the monaſtery, paſſed " through the gate to the Prior's lodgings, and there ſupped " with the king. When they went to reſt after ſupper, it was " intimated to his majeſty by one of the monks, that Saint " Cuthbert did not love the company of women. The queen " immediately aroſe at the king's command; and covered only " with a petticoat and cloak, haſtily returned by the gate " through which ſhe came, and went to the caſtle: praying " the Saint, that he would not puniſh her for what ſhe had " done through ignorance." CAP. xxxii. Wharton's ANGL. SACR. i. 760.

[n] See HIST. ENG. POETR. ii. ADD. EM. 164. And Milles's ROWLEY, p. 35.

evidently

evidently recourſe to that work, among his favourite Engliſh poets, where was the beſt ſtock of materials and decorations for deſcribing a battle, and with theſe he conſtructed his BATTLE OF HASTINGS.

I come now to the TRAGEDY OF ELLA. This is a Tragedy written at a time when plays, if any exiſted, were nothing more than a ballad or ſolitary recital, without plot or dialogue, and incapable of repreſentation. The piece before us is a regular drama. A ſtiffneſs of obſolete ſtyle, a cumberſome ſtanza, and prolix ſoliloquies, although the reciprocation of the dialogue is often entirely conformable to the modern practice, are almoſt the only obſtacles that render it unfit for the ſtage. It has the interpoſition of a Chorus of Minſtrels, which adapt their odes or ſongs to the moral of the piece. The fable is opened, and the cataſtrophe produced, according to the preſcriptions of Ariſtotelic ſeverity. The events and characters are few, and the buſineſs not intricate.

Some of theſe reaſons have been brought to prove, that it could not have been written by Chatterton. But they operate with much greater force againſt the probability that it was written by Rowley; even if we ſhould allow no more to Chatterton than thoſe

inconſiderable advantages which doctor Milles is pleaſed to grant him, that he might perhaps have juſt dipped into Shakeſpeare, Spenſer, Milton, and Pope; and ſeen a few plays at the Briſtol theatre [o]. But let us ſuppoſe, that ſome efforts were now making towards the legitimate drama: thoſe efforts never could have produced a performance ſo finiſhed as ELLA. Nor would ſuch high improvements in a popular exhibition ſo ſoon have been forgotten. Polite manners were beginning to emerge, and would not have ſuffered a quick, much leſs a total relapſe.

It it well known to every ſearcher into our antient ſtage, that the miſerable interludes even of the decline of the ſixteenth century, are infinitely ſubordinate to every other ſpecies of poetry then ſubſiſting: that they are utterly deſtitute of contrivance, character, ſentiment, and even of common decorum. The truth is, the Tragedy of ELLA, to which I will add the imperfect Tragedy of GOODWYN, in which is the fine ode on Freedom, is indebted to the Grecian ſchool, revived in the eighteenth century. Both are the effuſions of a young mind, warm from ſtudying Mr. Maſon's ELFRIDA and CARACTACUS.

[o] Milles's ROWLEY, p. 162.

It

It is another unſurmountable objection to the antiquity and authenticity of ELLA, that the ſubject is hiſtorical or civil. Repreſentations of religious ſubjects, were only faſhionable in the reign of Edward the fourth. And theſe, excluſive of the ſubject, by no means reſembled what we call a Play. They made a part of the great drama of ſuperſtition. Rowley, as a prieſt, was very unlikely to have begun this heterodox innovation, and to have been the firſt to compoſe a play not religious. The pious mayor of Briſtol never would have patroniſed ſo profane a confeſſor. Churches were our chief theatres before the Reformation: and the *dygne maiſtre* Canynge, the builder of a church, would have more naturally employed the dramatic talents of Rowley, to decorate his new edifice with the exhibition of a ſplendid MYSTERY. If Rowley had penetration and taſte, yet he had caution, he had prudence, and a reverence for his eſtabliſhment. But Rowley proceeds ſtill farther. He openly defends his new attempt, not in a palliative apology, but in a peremptory declaration of his opinion of the abſurdity of ſcriptural plays.

Playes made from hallie tales I holde unmeete,
Lette ſomme greate ſtorie of a manne be ſonge [p].

This was too bold and too refined a philoſophy for a prieſt of the fifteenth century. The firſt line is abſolute hereſy, and would have expoſed the writer to the cenſure of the church. But this paſſage is perfectly conſiſtent with the general ſpirit and turn of the Epiſtle in which it appears: and which, according to the Dean of Exeter, contains "ſpecimens of the author's abilities in ju-"dicious criticiſm, and pleaſant raillery, in "neither of which does he appear at all in-"ferior to Pope [q]." This is an unlucky conceſſion!

We are told, that this Tragedy abounds with leſſons of morality: it could not therefore have been the work of a diſſolute and unprincipled youth. Chatterton certainly knew better, than to diſguſt every decent reader by indulging his diſpoſition to profligacy. But vitious ſentiments would at once have deſtroyed his impoſture. His purpoſe was deception. He was writing in the character of a prieſt. Yet had not this been the caſe, I cannot conceive, with doctor Milles, "How his mind muſt have laboured "under the burthen of deſcribing patheti-

[p] Ep. M. C. 43.

[q] Milles's Rowley, p. 163.

"cally

" cally the pleaſures of virtue, and the " rewards of religion[r] !"

Doctor Milles inſiſts much, on the great knowledge of men and manners in ELLA[s]. I know not that there are any notations of character, nice delineations of nature, and ſituations of ſtrong intereſt, but ſuch as a young reader might eaſily tranſplant from a thouſand modern tragedies. But we will allow that there is great nature in this piece. And here we muſt recur to the vigorous prematurity of Chatterton's underſtanding. It was not in books only that this boy ſhewed his amazing intuition and comprehenſion. He looked on life with the ſame penetrating and pervading eye. His obſervation on things was equally quick and extenſive. His humour, his knowledge of the world, his attention to character, and his general perception of the modes of life, appear in his numerous ſatirical pieces both in proſe and verſe. When, after an education in a charity ſchool, he was diſmiſſed from the attorney's deſk, and came to London a ſtripling of ſeventeen, we are ſurpriſed, to uſe the expreſſive words of Mr. Walpole, " at the rapidity with which he ſeized all

[r] Milles's ROWLEY, p. 19.

[s] Ubi ſupr. p. 159.

" the

" the topics of converſation then in vogue, " whether of politics, literature, or faſhion [t]." We wonder at the addreſs, the command, the facility, the verſatility of mind, the acommodation of ſentiment, with which in a ſhort ſpace of time he compoſed a variety of pieces, and on ſubjects which uſually require long obſervation and experience.

Although many arguments drawn from ſtyle in general, have before ſhewn this tragedy to be ſpurious, I muſt here give a ſpecimen of dramatic ſtyle in particular, which will add to the proof. Nothing can be more in the manner of modern tragedy than the following dialogue, to mention no other, conſiſting of exclamations, ſhort and haſty ſentences, ſudden tranſitions, and frequent interruption.

Eg. Oh Ella! El. Ah! that ſemmlykeene [u] to me
Speeketh a legendary tale of woe.
Eg. Birtha is — El. What? Where? Howe? Saie, what
of ſhee?
Eg. Gone — El. Gone, ye goddes! Eg. Alas, ytte ys
too true!
Ye ſainctes, hee dies awaie with myckle woe!
Ella! What, Ella? oh! he lyves agen.
El. Cal me notte Ella: I am hymme no moe.

[t] Letter to the Editor of Chatterton's Miscellanies. Strawberry-Hill, 1779. p. 53.

[u] Appearance.

Where

Where ys ſhee gon? Awaie? Ah, ſpeake! How? When?
El. Eg. I will. — Caparyſon a ſcore of ſtedes, flie, flie.
Where ys ſhe? Swythynne ſpeake, or inſtant thou ſhalte die.
Eg. Stylle thie loud rage, and here thou whatte I knowe.
El. Oh, ſpeake! Eg. Lycke primroſe, &c [x].

A better ſcene for ſhewing the ſhrug and the ſtart to the greateſt advantage, never appeared at Drury-Lane theatre.

Before I diſmiſs this tragedy, I cannot but obſerve, that there is ſomething too ingenious and artificial, in Rowley's aſſuming this mode of celebrating an old champion of Briſtol, ſuppoſing that ſuch a one ever exiſted: and in dreſſing up an antient tale with a plot and fictitious characters. Had he been capable of writing a tragedy, it is improbable that he ſhould have taken a ſtory from ſuch a remote antiquity. It is more probable, that this ſtory was ſelected for a tragedy, in a refined age, when poetry looks back on antient manners with delight as moſt ſtriking to the imagination, and as moſt fit for her operations; and when the arts of writing had been carried to perfection.

Upon the whole of this Head, if there are ſuch things as principles of analogy, if the rules which criticiſm has eſtabliſhed for

[x] T. E. 1145.

judging of the age of a poem, are beyond the caprice of conjecture, then are the TRAGEDY OF ELLA, and the BATTLE OF HASTINGS, modern compoſitions: if they are antient, then are the elegancies of Gibbon's ſtyle coeval with the deplorable proſe of Caxton.

VI. COMPARISON OF CHATTERTON'S POEMS WITH THE POEMS ATTRIBUTED TO ROWLEY. It has been urged, and for an obvious reaſon, that the poems acknowledged by Chatterton to be of his own compoſition, are of a caſt much inferiour to thoſe which he produced as written by Rowley. If this be True, we ſhould remember, that Chatterton laviſhed all his powers on the counterfeit Rowley, with whom he intended to aſtoniſh or to deceive the world, and that his Miſcellanies were the temporary progeny of indigence, inconvenience, and diſtraction. That the former pieces, were compoſed, with one uniform object in view, in a ſtate of leiſure and repoſe, through the courſe of nearly one year and a half; and the latter, amidſt the want of common neceſſaries, in diſquietude and in diſſipation, at the call of bookſellers, and often on occaſional topics, within four months. But I do not grant this

this boaſted inequality. If there is any, at leaſt the ſame hand appears in both. The miſcellanies contain many ſtrokes of uncommon ſpirit and imagination, and ſuch as would mark any boy of ſeventeen for a genius. Let me add, that both collections contain an imagery of the ſame ſort. Mr. Walpole obſerves, with his uſual elegant originality of ſtyle and ſentiment, that Chatterton and the ſuppoſed Rowley "were "animated by ſo congenial a ſpirit, that the "compoſitions of the one can hardly, very "hardly, be diſcriminated from the other.— "The ſame ſoul animates all, and the limbs "that would remain to Rowley would in-"deed, be *diſjecti membra poetæ*. Rowley "would not only have written with a ſpirit "by many centuries poſterior to that of his "age, but his mantle eſcaping the hands of "all his cotemporaries and ſucceſſors, muſt "have been preſerved nothing the worſe for "time, and reſerved to inveſt Chatterton "from head to foot [y]."

In the Pſeudo-Rowley, we are impoſed upon by the charm of old ſpelling and old language. Let us, with the leaſt verbal variation, cloath an allegorical deſcription of the power

[y] LETTER, ut ſupr. p. 6.

of a friend's poetry, from Chatterton's miſcellanies, in the orthography of antiquity. We ſhall think we are reading a chorus in the Tragedy of ELLA or of GOODWYN.

Whanne goulden Auctomne, wreeth'd in rypende corne,
From porpel cluſterrs preſte the froathie wynne,
Thie poynctelle dyd hys ſallowe browes adorne,
And made the bewtyes of the ſeaſonne thyne.

Pale ruggyd Winterr, bendynge oer hys tredde,
Hys gryzzled heare bedropte wyth ycie deawe,
Hys eyen a duſkie lyghte, congeel'd and dedde,
Hys roabe a tynge of bryghte ethereal blewe:

Hys trayne a mottled, ſanguyne ſabble, clowde,
He lympes alonge the rouſſet dreerie moore;
Whylſt ryſynge whyrlwyndes, blaſtynge keene and lowde,
Rowle the whyte ſourges to the ſoundynge ſhore, &c.—

Faunſie, whoſe varyous fygure-tynctured veſte
Was everr chaungynge to a diffrente hewe,
Her hedde with varyed bayes and flourets dreſte,
Herr eyne two ſpanggles of the mornynge dewe:

Ynn daunſing actytude ſhe ſwepte the ſtrynge,
And nowe ſhe ſoares, and now agayne deſcendes,
And nowe, reclynynge onne the Zephyrr's wynge,
Unto the velvette-veſtyd mee [z] ſhe bends.

Peace, dekkt ynne alle the ſoftneſſe of the dove,
Overre thie paſſiouns ſpredde herre ſylver plewme, &c [a].

[z] Meadow.

[a] See Chatterton's MISCELLANIES, Lond. 1778. p. 67, 68. The ingenious author of CURSORY OBSERVATIONS ON THE POEMS

It has been aſſerted, that there are many attorney's clerks in town, who by reading plays and the monthly miſcellanies, and frequenting the theaters, get a better knack of writing than was to be found in Chatterton[b]. In the mean time, it is never recollected, at leaſt it is never acknowledged, that in Rowley, although he does not ſuffer our attention to flag, there are many flimzy lines, many puerile paſſages, examples of want of judgement, and ſtrokes of a young compoſer. The quick repetition of his ſhewy compariſons, and his indulgence in deſcription, the favourite field of a youthful poet, have been before obſerved. In the BATTLE OF HASTINGS, we have the following deſcription of the morning.

> And now the greie-eyd morne, with violets dreſt,
> Shakyng the dewdrops on the flourie meedes,
> Fled with her roſie radiance to the weſt;
> Forth from the eaſterne gatte the fyerie ſteedes,
> Of the bryght ſunne awaytynge ſpirits leads;
> The ſunne in fierie pomp enthron'd on hie, &c.

Who does not ſee, that this, with twenty others, is ſuch a deſcription, ſpun from the

POEMS OF ROWLEY, has been beforehand with me in this ſort of tryal. But mine was made, before I had ſeen his very ſenſible and concluſive performance.

[b] Bryant, ubi ſupr. p. 491.

many-

many-coloured woof of modern imagery, as young adventurers in poetry, whether young apprentices or young academics, hazard in a Magazine? Yet this is a morning, which, in the opinion of the Dean of Exeter, has thoſe graces that "make the Mornings of Homer "and Virgil inſipid in the compariſon [c]." Soon afterwards, we have the following touches of not the moſt humble bombaſt. "The ſun, having riſen three hours, beheld "the fields of Haſtings, floating with illu-"minated gore; and beſmearing his locks "with the ſteam of the bloody vapours, "puſhed on his chariot with unuſual rapidi-"ty, and haſtened to cleanſe his polluted "brows in the hiſſing ocean [d]." The reſerved and the gentle Virgil has only feigned, that the ſun foretold the murther of Ceſar, by hiding his bright head in obſcurity. But the learned doctor Milles is of opinion, that "theſe beautiful images of Rowley greatly "ſurpaſs that of Virgil, where he makes the "ſun expreſs his abhorrence of Ceſar's "aſſaſſination [e]." What can be more fooliſhly fanciful, excuſable only from a boy of fifteen,

[b] B. H. ii. 211. Milles's ROWLEY, p. 116.

[c] B. H. ii. 561.

[d] Ubi ſupr. p. 142. See Virg. GEORG. i. 460.

than

than the following thought of the appearance of guſhing blood tinged by the moon?

Reflected by the moone ſeemd rubies mixt wyth pearles [f].

But we are taught implicitly to believe, that there are no inſtances of falſe taſte, and of the bloated ſublime, in Rowley. Even in the midſt of pathos, he is frequently deſcriptive and ornamental. In the Paſtorals, his diſtreſſed ſhepherds do not, as the Dean of Exeter apprehends, complain quite in the ſtile of the Mantuan ſhepherds, deprived of their lands by Auguſtus; but ſay, as I have before obſerved to another purpoſe, that England wears a bloody dreſs, and ſtains her face with the gore of her champions, and that Confuſion ſails through air in bloody garments. One of them, as we have ſeen, cloſes his bitter complaint with this very unpathetic and unpaſtoral idea, which flowed from Chatterton's attachment to antient manners, that "the portcullis of the caſtle of "his heart was fallen [g]!" The common fault of moſt paſtorals is, that the ſhepherds are too elegant. It is ſeldom that they are blamed for converſing with a figurative ſublimity. In the fourth Eclogue, *twa pynynge maydens* lament their lovers ſlain at the battle of Saint

[f] B. H. ii. 40.

[g] Ecl. ii. 50. 57.

Alban's

Alban's, in a trite tiſſue of poetical and very general imagery. I do not mean to inſinuate, that all theſe ſpecimens ſhew a want of genius. Perhaps ſome of them prove the very contrary. In a young mind imagination is not always juſt. And on the ſame principles, many of the abſurdities in Chatterton's miſcellanies might be defended. In the mean time, in proving that Rowley has his faults as well as Chatterton, I am not conſcious that I have exaggerated matters, by an unfair diſplay of the worſt paſſages. My opponents have certainly done this, in their attempt to expoſe the imperfections of Chatterton's acknowledged poetry, and of its inferiority to Rowley [h].

[h] I muſt here obſerve, that Mr. Bryant has contraſted the firſt twenty lines of Chatterton's CONSULIAD, with a paſſage taken, as he ſays, from a poem called the CONSULTATION, written by one of Chatterton's intimate friends, and of the ſame age. The contraſt is intended to ſhew, how much Chatterton was outdone by one of his young friends on a ſimilar ſubject. OBSERVATIONS, p. 491. ſeq. But, as I am informed by Mr. Steevens, the lines quoted by Mr. Bryant from the CONSULTATION, are ſtolen, with little alteration, by Chatterton's friend, whoever he was, from the beginning of "PATRIOTISM, a Mock-heroic in ſix cantos," publiſhed in 1765, reprinted the next year, and written by Mr. Thomas Bentley, the critic's ſon. I quote Bentley's lines, that they may be compared with thoſe produced by Mr. Bryant.

Twas

VII. Miscellaneous Observations.

In theſe poems there is no learning. I mean, Gothic Learning: ſuch as the pedantry of a learned prieſt in the fifteenth century would have exhibited. There are no alluſions or references to the claſſics of the dark ages. Our antient writers are perpetually ſhewing the ſmall ſtock of knowledge which they poſſeſſed, by quoting the few authors, and thoſe of a particular caſt, then in vogue. A ſtudious eccleſiaſtic of this period would have given us a variety of uſeleſs authorities from Ariſtotle, from Boethius and from the Fathers. Even allowing that the ſuppoſed Rowley was cultivated in literature beyond his times, we ſee no marks of a better learning. Had the writer of theſe poems ever known,

Twas night; the voice of jollity was huſh'd,
Doz'd all her vot'ries, reaſonably fluſh'd;
Song, argument, invention, laughter, jeſt,
Wit, bawdry, criticiſm, had reel'd to reſt:
Scandal hah empty'd all his tub on Bute,
Abuſe of Royalty itſelf was mute.
Sleep in his pleaſing bands had all thing ty'd,
All but the eyes of diſappointed pride.
She lay revolving in her anxious mind
How Reſignation had too much reſign'd, &c.
Seeking repoſe from ſide to ſide ſhe flings,
No change of poſture pauſe of anguiſh brings, &c.

I think he would have cited or named, at leaſt ſome of the Latin poets.

In theſe poems we have no Religion. I do not mean that we have no recommendations to virtue, or touches of morality. But they are not tinctured with a due ſhare of what the French call *onction*. I mean, they have no prolix devotional epiſodes, ſuch as would have naturally flowed from a writer of Rowley's profeſſion and character. Inſtead of addreſſes to the HOLY VIRGIN, we have long and laboured invocations to Truth, to Hope, to Content, and other divinities of the pagan creed, or rather of the creed of modern poetry. Rowley would have interſperſed his poetry with texts of ſcripture. Lydgate, in the SIEGE of THEBES, quotes Saint Luke, to prove that avarice, ambition, and envy, are the primary cauſes of war. Had Rowley written the BALADE OF CHARITIE, inſtead of an ingenious apologue, enlivened with agreeable incidents and pleaſing deſcriptions, he would have given us a tedious yet edifying homily in rhyme, not without frequent confirmations of his doctrine from the Meditations of Saint Bernard, and from Saint Paul to the Corinthians. With all his poetry, he would never have made a ballad on charity ſo poetical.

We

We miſs the marks of another ſort of reading in theſe poems, and which a real Rowley would have ſhewn, I mean of old romances. To our old poets, the moſt celebrated atchievements and champions of the fabulous chivalry, the Round table with ſir Lancelot and ſir Triſtram, and Charlemagne with his twelve peers, were the favourite and eternal topics of alluſion. Particularly, to this ſort of alluſion, a large field was naturally opened in the ſongs of the minſtrels, who accompany the liſts in the Interlude of the TOURNAMENT. But inſtead of celebrating king Arthur, or any other diſtinguiſhed chief of the romantic ſtory, which the ſubject dictated, in one of the two odes, where they are called upon to ſing "ſomme actyonn dyre of auntyante kynges," William the conquerour is deſcribed, poetically enough, chacing the ſtag in a dreary foreſt. In the other, we have an allegorical deſcription of BATTAYLE ſubdued by PLEASURE[i]. In the firſt of theſe, Chatterton was in his walk of antient Engliſh hiſtory. In

[i] In which are theſe lines, v. 166.

Wreathedde with floures of aiglintine, —
Hylte hys ſworde and gaberdyne.

Plainly from Collins's Odes,

And hid'ſt in wreaths of flowers his bloodleſs ſword.

the ſecond, his knowledge of modern imagery appears.

Had ſuch a poet as Rowley exiſted in the fifteenth century, he would have been idolized by his age, he would have been complimented by cotemporary writers, and his works would have been multiplied by numerous manuſcripts, which would have now been remaining in our libraries. He would have been printed by Caxton, who diligently ſearched after all the poetry of his times, and would have deſcended in repeated editions to poſterity. His life would have been written by Bale, who mentions obſcure authors, now deſervedly forgotten: and by the claſſical Leland, he would have been undoubtedly recorded, as the great and rare ſcholar, who underſtood Greek in the reign of Edward the fourth. That this collection of poems ſhould ſubſiſt in one copy only, and that unſeen, unknown, nor ever once tranſcribed, for ſo long a period, is incredible. That ſuch a prodigy ſhould have been ſuppreſſed for three hundred years, is inconſiſtent

But perhaps Rowley, in the courſe of his extenſive Greek reading, borrowed the image, from whence Collins undoubtedly took it, from Calliſtratus's beautiful Greek ode, or ſcolion, on Harmodius and Ariſtogeiton, preſerved by Athenaeus, Deipnos. xv. 695. A. edit. Caſaub.

with

with the common equity and the common curioſity of mankind, and with that notice which diſtinguiſhed merit ſo naturally demands. Excellence muſt ſtruggle into obſervation. Beauty cannot be long concealed. *Diu celari non poterit.* A meteor will attract every eye.

It is with diffidence and reluctance that I diſſent from Mr. Bryant, whoſe uncommon learning, and ingenious conjectures, have diffuſed ſo much rational illuſtration over the moſt doubtful and difficult parts of antient hiſtory. He obſerves, "We may not be able "to account any more for theſe manuſcripts "being ſo long neglected, than for thoſe of "Heſychius, Phedrus, and Velleius Pater-"culus [k]." The caſes are not quite parallel. Theſe authors, once in vogue, ſunk into oblivion on the irreſiſtible deſtruction of polite literature. When knowledge returned, they were reſtored and reſcued from neglect. He adds, that many manuſcripts of the *ſame nature*, lie concealed and diſregarded in our public libraries. None, I believe, of the ſame ſpecies and importance. It is often aſked, continues our ſagacious critic, why Rowley is not mentioned by Bale or Leland. I truſt, I have aſſigned the true reaſon. Thoſe biographers, he ſubjoins,

[k] Observations, p. 459.

have

have not mentioned Robert of Glouceſter: and why might they not have omitted Rowley? But Robert of Glouceſter was an obſcure unpopular chronicler. They could not have been blind to the luſtre of Rowley's name. Another cauſe is alleged, that there are ſtrong marks of party in theſe poems, and that therefore they were ſuppreſſed. It is indeed too true, that our author is ſometimes a Yorkiſt and ſometimes a Lancaſtrian. But we will ſuppoſe that his Yorkiſm predominated. He was therefore of courſe proſcribed in the reign of Henry the ſeventh. Why were not the works of the Lancaſtrian Lydgate, the great and the perpetual panegyriſt of king Henry the ſixth, exterminated by Edward the fourth, or condemned to an inacceſſible cheſt ſecured by ſix locks? This reaſoning, I fear, is too refined.

VIII. CHARACTER AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF CHATTERTON. It is aſked, with ſome degree of plauſibility, how could Chatterton, who was educated in a charity ſchool, where only writing and arithmetic were taught, produce ſuch fine pieces of poetry, which ſhew marks of more liberal purſuits, and ſtudies of another nature? In the ſame

[1] Bryant, ubi ſupr. p. 460.

general

general way of putting a queſtion, it may be aſked, how could that idle and illiterate fellow Shakeſpeare, who was driven out of Warwickſhire for deer-ſtealing, write the tragedy of OTHELLO? I give as general an anſwer, that the powers of unconquerable mind outgo plans of education and conditions of life. The enthuſiaſm of intellectual energy ſurmounts every impediment to a career that is preſſing forward to futurity.

> Ergo vivida vis animi pervicit, et extra
> Proceſſit longe flammantia mœnia mundi [m].

But let us attend to a few particulars, which have not yet been diſtinctly ſtated, and properly digeſted. Our charity-boy Chatterton, in his tenth year began to hire books from a circulating library at Briſtol. It is a ſtrong argument on the part of my hypotheſis, that from his earlieſt age, he was ſtudious to the moſt uncommon degree. Between his eleventh and twelfth years, he wrote a catalogue of the books he had read to the number of ſeventy. The uſher of the ſchool, Mr. Thomas Philips, was *ſmit with the love of ſacred ſong:* and ſometimes relaxed the duties of the mechanical penman, by writing poetry in the magazines. To this

[m] Lucret. i. 73.

illicit

illicit practice he seduced some of his pupils: and by his example or encouragement, many of the senior scholars were easily tempted to strew the thorny paths of arithmetic with flowers, and to try their hands at verses. Chatterton was now almost twelve: and although not in the higher classes, seems to have shared in the general emulation. Yet, as it appears, with privacy. His first poetical production, when he was now aged only eleven years and five months, is a satire on some methodist, such a one as it was easy to find at Bristol, and is entitled, THE APOSTATE WILL. It has a degree of humour, and an ease of versification, which are astonishing in such a child. About the same time, having now received confirmation from the bishop, a ceremony which struck his imagination, and on which he made very serious and sensible remarks, he wrote eighteen lines on the day of judgement, and paraphrased the ninth chapter of Job, and some chapters of Isaiah. We are told by his sister, that "he had been *gloomy* from "the time he began to learn, but we re- "marked he was more *chearful* after he "began to write poetry[n]."

[n] See Milles's ROWLEY, p. 9.

Thus

Thus on the chill Lapponian's dreary land,
For many a long month loſt in ſnow profound,
When Sol from Cancer ſends the ſeaſon bland,
And in their northern caves the ſtorms are bound;
From ſilent mountains, ſtraight with ſtartling ſound,
Torrents are hurl'd, green hills emerge, and lo,
The trees with foliage, cliffs with flowers are crown'd,
Pure rills through vales of verdure warbling go,
And wonder, love, and joy, the peaſant's heart o'erflow [o].

Mr. Bryant affirms, that Chatterton ſhewed no parts at ſchool, and acquaints us, that "the maſter of the ſchool, Mr. Haynes, "is ſtill alive, who ſays, that he was not a "boy of extraordinary parts, nor did he "make any diſplay of abilities, during the "time that he was at ſchool, which was till "he was fourteen and an half [p]." I have all due reſpect for the capability and veracity of Mr. Haynes, the worthy maſter of Colſton's charity-ſchool at Briſtol. But for the ſame reaſon for which perhaps Mr. Haynes thought him a blockhead, I think him an ingenious boy. The teacher of arithmetic could not diſcern the future poet. Mr. Haynes's opinion reminds us of the dancing-maſter, who, when Lord Oxford was appointed firſt

[o] Beattie's MINSTREL, B. i. ſt. 59.
[p] OBSERVATIONS, p. 560.

Miniſter to queen Anne, declared he wondered what her majeſty could ſee in lord Oxford, for that when he had the honour of teaching his lordſhip to dance, he was the greateſt dunce at a minuet that he ever remembered.

What was ſuppoſed to be dullneſs in Chatterton was genius. The ſymptoms of talents were miſconſtrued by his cotemporaries. They were diſguſted with his pride, which was a conſciouſneſs of preeminence of abilities. Before he was five years old, he was the little tyrant of his playfellows, and the leader of the ſport. Mr. Capel, now a jeweller of Briſtol, a brother apprentice in the ſame houſe with Chatterton, relates, that there was "generally a drearineſs in his look, "and a wildneſs attended with a viſible con-"tempt for others [q]." The ſilence, the ſolitude, of this viſionary boy, his eccentric habits, his ſingularities of behaviour, were not attributed to the true cauſe. His fits of melancholy were miſtaken for ſullenneſs. His ſiſter ſays, that he was "ſometimes ſo "*gloomed*, that for many days together, he "would ſay very little, and that by con-"ſtraint." An old female relation, who undoubtedly thought him mad, has reported,

[q] Bryant, ut ſupr. p. 525.

that

that "he talked very little, was very abſent "in company, and uſed very often to walk "by the river-ſide, talking to himſelf, and "flouriſhing his arms about[r]." He deſpiſed diſcretion, a virtue allied to many meanneſſes, and in the place of worldly prudence, attention to propoſals of economy, and a regular profeſſion, ſubſtituted his anticipations of immortality. He ſcorned ſubſiſtence, but what his own poetry could alone confer[s]. One of his young friends who uſed to viſit him at ſchool, informs us, that when the ſenior boys were attempting to rival their uſher Philips, in a ſort of poetical conteſt, Chatterton remained an idle ſpectator; and from his inattention on this occaſion, infers his want both of "inclination and abilities

[r] Croft's LOVE AND MADNESS, p. 148.

[s] I am informed from Mr. Croſs, late an apothecary in Brook-ſtreet, Holbourn, where Chatterton lived and died for want of bread, that hardly a morning or evening paſſed but he would ſtep into his ſhop to chat. Mr. Croſs ſays, that his converſation, a little infidelity excepted, was moſt captivating: and that by the moſt preſſing and repeated importunities he could never be perſuaded to accept of frequent invitations to dine or ſup. One evening, however, human frailty ſo far prevailed over his dignity, as to tempt him to partake of the regale of a barrel of oyſters, when Mr. Croſs obſerved him to eat *moſt voraciouſly*.

" for literary purſuits [t]." But, ſilent and unſuſpected, he was now ſoliciting the muſe in ſecret. This apparent indifference was owing to the coyneſs or delicacy of genius, not always willing to diſcover itſelf; and avoiding the obſervation of others, not ſo much from fear as from contempt. At the hours allotted to play, we are told that he conſtantly retired to read. This was the YOUNG EDWIN, who forged Rowley's poems.

It was owing to his pride, which has been conſtrued into veracity, that he ſo inflexibly perſiſted to the laſt, that theſe poems were written by Rowley. To this ſecret of his boſom he had vowed eternal fidelity, and there is a degree of heroiſm in his obſtinacy. Although in a ſtate of indigence, and a candidate for reputation, no perſuaſion, no expectation of gain or of praiſe, no intereſt, could induce him to depart from his original declaration. When he perceived that the poems were treated as forgeries, and that he was traduced as a cheat, the ſuperiority which he had always maintained was affected, and he became ſtill more determined in aſſerting what he had once aſſerted. His vanity

[t] Milles's ROWLEY, p. 454.

was

was piqued in an improper way. He thought it would be more to his diſadvantage, to own than to ſuppreſs the truth: he rather wiſhed to eſcape the character of falſehood, than to claim the merit of excellent poetry. He had formed golden dreams of the ſucceſs of this impoſture. But finding that his forgeries were ſuſpected, and that his hopes of profit were at an end, he would not avail himſelf of that fame which an open confeſſion would have put into his power, and which now only remained to ſupply the place of ſolid emolument [u]. Criticiſm, the companion and the aſſiſtant of truth, has endeavoured to replace

[u] I take this opportunity of rectifying a miſinformation which appears in the HISTORY OF ENGLISH POETRY, ii. 142. I have ſaid, that Mr. Walpole's deciſion on Rowley, was delivered to Chatterton after he came to town in 1770. This is not true. Chatterton, not yet removed from Briſtol, and almoſt two years before, had received this opinion from Mr. Walpole, in a very kind and affectionate letter. Chatterton returned two peeviſh anſwers, and their correſpondence ceaſed. Had Chatterton, when he came to town in 1770, done himſelf the honour to call on Mr. Walpole, I am confident that Mr. Walpole, although he ſaw his forgeries, and was juſtly diſguſted at the incivility of his letters, would have patroniſed his genius in the moſt liberal manner, and probably prevented his miſerable end. Mr. Walpole never ſaw Chatterton.

thoſe

thoſe laurels, which he tore from his brows with his own hand.

I have mentioned his reſources from books, and that he borrowed from a Circulating Library. Who can tell what uncommon books, excluſive of thoſe of mere entertainment, may be accidentally contained in ſuch a collection? We are informed, that long before he left ſchool, he was devoted to ſtudy; and that he borrowed from Mr. Long, Mr. Shiercliff, and particularly from Mr. Green, who had the largeſt collection of any bookſeller in Briſtol, and to whom he was indebted for Speght's Chaucer, ſuch books as their ſhops produced [w]. From others he procured, Skinner, Kerſey, and the ſmall Saxon dictionary. It is urged, that the expreſſion *fructuous entendement*, is in a manuſcript poem of Occleve, to which Chatterton could not poſſibly have acceſs [x]. But the expreſſion appears in a fragment of Occleve's Lamentation on the Death of Chaucer, in a miſcellany called the MUSES LIBRARY, printed in 1738, a book likely to be found in a Circulating Library, and to be borrowed by a reader of old poetry.

[w] Milles's ROWLEY, p. 5.

[x] Bryant, ubi ſupr. 415.

My

My Maſtre Chaucer! Flowre of eloquence,
Mirrour of *fructuous entendement* [y].

In this controverſy, deep learning has been miſtaken for general reading. Let us recollect, that in the preſent age, literary topics, even of the moſt abſtruſe and recondite nature, are communicated and even familiariſed to all ranks and all ages, by Reviews, Magazines, Abridgements, Encyclopedes, and other works of a ſimilar kind, which form the *ſchool of the people*. But I will add an anecdote, never yet publiſhed, which ſhews that Chatterton might have ſeen ſome books of greater variety and curioſity. During his life-time, the Old Library at Briſtol was of univerſal acceſs; and I am moſt credibly informed, that he was introduced to it by Mr. Cattcott, a clergyman of Briſtol, who wrote on the Deluge, the brother of Mr. George Catcott.

While he continued in the Attorney's office, he had ſo little of his maſter's buſineſs to do, that ſometimes he was not detained for two hours in a day from his favourite object. And while he remained in this ſituation, he frequently ſate up all night, and

[y] Lond. For T. Davies, p. 31. 8vo. I have printed the Whole from MSS. Rawlinſ. 647, and from other manuſcripts. See Hist. Engl. Poetr. ii. 43.

wrote

wrote by moon-light[z]. It has not been obſerved, that his maſter's office might have ſupplied blank ſlips of refuſe or neglected parchment. To a penury of parchment it was certainly owing, that he wrote his lines of poetry like proſe; a practice, antient indeed, but ſeldom uſed, and totally diſcontinued for at leaſt two hundred years before the age of Rowley, when parchment was become a cheap and a common commodity. Neceſſity dictated this mode of writing to Chatterton, which might be wrong, but had the probability of being right. But I have ſomething ſtill more ſuſpicious to ſay of Chatterton's parchments.

And here I muſt own, I ſhould have thought, that the dean of Exeter knew how to play a better game at whiſt than to ſhew his cards to his adverſary. He has however been ſo very indulgent, as to exhibit a long and a well-atteſted narrative, which amounts to this plain fact: that Chatterton practiced experiments to give the ink and the parchments, which he produced, the colour and appearance of antiquity. Yet he ſoftens the matter by ſaying, that "this account only "proves that Chatterton was diſpoſed to

[z] His Sister's Letter, Milles, ubi ſupr. p. 11.

"exerciſe

" exerciſe his inventive genius :" and that theſe experiments were by no means likely to anſwer the end propoſed, and to produce the intended effect [a]. But as this ſtory is not told with all its circumſtances, I ſhall here give it, from the ſame teſtimony, with ſome material improvements or corrections, in the following unanſwerable letter, written by Mr. Croft to Mr. Steevens, and lately communicated.

" To George Steevens, Eſq. Hampſtead Heath.

DEAR SIR,

IT gives me pleaſure that LOVE AND MADNESS, which I put together in a few idle hours, as much for the ſake of doing juſtice to poor Chatterton as of blunting the edge of Hackman's ſhocking example, has ſo well anſwered the former purpoſe.

" ——— Where'er (his bones at reſte)
" His ſpryte to haunte delyghteth beſte,"

Chatterton muſt be now not a little gratified when he looks down upon the ſquabbles he has raiſed on Earth. Every ſyllable which I have made Hackman relate of him in LOVE AND MADNESS is, I firmly believe, religiouſly true. Walmſly was my

[a] See Milles's ROWLEY, p. 437.

Tenant for the Houſe in Shoreditch where Chatterton lodged with him, at the time he gave me the information contained in my Book. Chatterton's Letters which I printed, and which are hardly leſs ſingular perhaps than Rowley's Poems, are confeſſedly original.

As I cannot ſpare time from my profeſſion to enter any further into this diſpute, and as you inform me that Mr. Warton is going to publiſh ſomething, I write this Letter, according to your deſire, in anſwer to your's of yeſterday, reſpecting what long ſince I ſaid to you of Mr. Ruddall; and it is perfectly at Mr. Warton's ſervice. But I muſt deſire he will print it exactly as I ſend it you. When I have ſpoken for myſelf, he may draw his own arguments from my communication.

The left hand column is an extract from Dean Milles's quarto edition of Rowley's, i. e. of Chatterton's Poems, p. 436, 7. The right hand column is my account of the ſame buſineſs. In ſome material circumſtances he certainly errs. It were eaſy to ſhew, the Dean has condemned Chatterton and robbed him of Rowley's Poems upon ſlighter evidence of leſs material miſtakes.

That the Dean ſhould have received *all* his information of this buſineſs from Mr. Ruddall is certainly impoſſible, becauſe ſome part of his

his account of it is certainly untrue. The paſſages in the Dean's account, on which I comment, are marked, that they may be printed in Italics.

"A *ſingular* circumſtance relating to the Hiſtory of this Ceremony ("of paſſing the "old bridge") *has been communicated to the Publick within theſe two laſt years*; and candour requires that it ſhould not paſs unnoticed here, eſpecially as the Character of the relator leaves no room for ſuſpicion. The objectors to the authenticity of theſe Poems may poſſibly triumph in the diſcovery of a fact, which contains, in their opinion, a deciſive proof that Chatterton was the author of this Paper, and (as they would infer) of all

The circumſtance is ſingular, and I have always thought ſo; but it has never yet, I believe, been *communicated to the Publick*; though I certainly meant it ſhould ſome time or other.

all the Poetry which he produced under Rowley's name; but, *when the circumſtances are attentively examined*, the reader will probably find, that even this fact tends rather to eſtabliſh, than to invalidate, the authenticity of the Poems.

It is not clear to me, that the advocates for Chatterton have occaſion to be apprehenſive, *if the circumſtances ſhould be attentively examined* even according to the Dean's own ſhewing. But mine is ſomewhat different.

Mr. John Ruddall, a Native and Inhabitant of Briſtol, and formerly Apprentice to Mr. Francis Greſley, an Apothecary in that City, was well acquainted with Chatterton, whilſt he was Apprentice to Mr. Lambert. During that time, Chatterton frequently called upon him at his Maſter's houſe, and, *ſoon after he had printed this Account of the Bridge* in

My viſit to Briſtol of a few days, in order to collect information

in the Briſtol Paper, *told Mr. Ruddall, that he was the author of it; but, it occurring to him afterwards, that he might be called upon to produce the original, he brought to him one day a piece of Parchment, about the ſize of a half Sheet of Fool's-Cap paper; Mr. Ruddall does not think that any thing was written on it when produced by Chatterton, but he ſaw him write ſeveral Words, if not lines, in a Character which Mr. Ruddall did not underſtand, which he ſays was totally unlike Engliſh, and, as he apprehended, was meant by Chatterton to imitate or repreſent the original from which this Account was printed.* He cannot

tion concerning Chatterton, was on the 23d of July, 1778. At that time I gave ſomething to the Mother and Siſter for their voluntary communications to me. After I publiſhed LOVE AND MADNESS, I laid a larger plan for their benefit, which I hope ſtill to ſee carried into execution; and I deſtined ſomething more to the family of him whoſe genius I ſo much reſpected, though I well knew his family deemed me their enemy for endeavouring to prove him guilty of Forgery. Prevented from going to Bath, and conſequently from giving what I had ſet apart for this purpoſe, with my own Hands, I gladly ſeized the

cannot determine preciſely how much Chatterton wrote in this manner, but ſays, that the time he ſpent in that Viſit did not exceed three quarters of an hour; the Size of the Parchment, however, (even ſuppoſing it to have been filled with writing) will in ſome meaſure aſcertain the quantity which it contained.

the liberty allowed me by a friend of Mr. Ruddall to beg this favour of him. On the 22nd of March, 1781, I wrote to Mr. Ruddall, to whom I was then a perfect ſtranger, making uſe of his Friend's name, and encloſing a Draught to him or his order for ten pounds, requeſting he would give the Money to Chatterton's Mother and Siſter. On the 30th of the ſame Month, Mr. Ruddall called upon me in Lincoln's Inn; appeared, as I imagined, to lean to the ſide of this queſtion which I have ever thought to be the right; and told me, of his own accord, what certainly agrees no more with

with the Dean's account, than what I have already related agrees with the Dean's saying that Mr. Ruddall told this, *in* 1779, *on the prospect of procuring a gratuity of ten Pounds for Chatterton's Mother, from a Gentleman who came to Bristol in order to collect information concerning the Son's History.*

He says also, that *when Chatterton had written on the Parchment, he held it over the Candle, to give it the appearance of antiquity, which changed the Colour of the Ink, and made the Parchment appear black and a little contracted: he never saw him make any similar attempt, nor was the Parchment pro-*

If my Memory not only fails me now, but failed me the same day, and has failed me ever since, Mr. Ruddall will correct me. To him I appeal, and by him I must submit to be corrected. But, on the 30th of March, 1781, he told me, AS I THINK, that *he assisted Chatterton in disguising*

produced afterwards by Chatterton to him, or (as far as he knows) to any other perſon. From a perfect knowledge of Chatterton's abilities, he thinks him to have been incapable of writing the Battle of Haſtings, or any of thoſe Poems produced by him under the name of Rowley, nor does he remember that Chatterton ever mentioned Rowley's Poems to him, either as original or the contrary; but ſometimes (though very rarely) intimated that he was poſſeſſed of ſome valuable literary productions. *Mr. Ruddall had promiſed Chatterton not to reveal this Secret, and he ſcrupulouſly kept his word till the year* 1779; *but*, ON THE PROS-

guiſing SEVERAL *pieces of Parchment with the appearances of Age, juſt before "the Account of "paſſing the "Bridge" appeared in Farley's Journal; that, after they had made ſeveral experiments, Chatterton ſaid, "this "will do, now I will "black* THE *Parch-"ment;" that, whether he told him at the time what* THE *Parchment was, he could not remember; that he believed he did not ſee Chatterton black* THE *Parchment, but that Chatterton told him, after "the Account of "paſſing the Bridge" had appeared in the News-paper, that* THE *Parchment which he had blacked and diſguiſed, after their experiments, was what he*

PROSPECT OF PROCURING A GRATUITY OF TEN POUNDS, FOR CHATTERTON'S MOTHER FROM A GENTLEMAN WHO CAME TO BRISTOL IN ORDER TO COLLECT INFORMATION CONCERNING HER SON'S HISTORY, he thought ſo material a benefit to the Family would fully juſtify him for divulging a ſecret by which no perſon now living could be a ſufferer."

he had ſent to the Printer containing the ACCOUNT."

As this appeared to me the moſt deciſive evidence, I aſked Mr. Ruddall's leave to make uſe of his name about it, which he granted me; and I made a Memorandum of it, the ſame day, at the diſtance of a few hours. But it is ſtill poſſible my Memory might deceive me. In matters more ſerious than the authenticity of Poems, which are certainly exquiſite, whoever wrote them, it is not my way, I hope, to be more poſitive than I ought.

Mr. Ruddall will excuſe me if I ſay, that I cannot poſſibly allow him, or any one, to determine the authenticity of the Poems, by telling the Dean, or the world, that, "*from* "*a perfect knowledge of Chatterton's abilities*, "HE thinks him to have been incapable of "writing the Battle of Haſtings, or any of "thoſe Poems produced by him under the "name of Rowley."

It appears to me that I cannot poſſibly, all this time, have been noticing what does not relate to me, becauſe Chatterton's Siſter, when ſhe thanks me in a Letter dated April the 20th, 1781, for what I ſent her and her Mother, through Mr. Ruddall, ſays that "the only benefits they have reaped from *the* "*labours of her dear Brother*," are what they have received from me.

Convey this to Mr. Warton, if you chooſe it, with many thanks for the pleaſure I have received from his Hiſtory of Engliſh Poetry; and believe me to be,

Dear Sir,

Your obliged friend,

Lincolns-inn,
Feb. 5. 1782.

HERBERT CROFT, Jun."

I will not affront the common ſenſe of my readers, by making many remarks on a tale which ſpeaks for itſelf. A man is brought to the bar for counterfeiting antient writings. An advocate for the priſoner ſhifts the accuſation, and contends, that he could not be guilty, becauſe it was impoſſible that ſuch methods as he practiced for making the counterfeit could ſucceed. The attempt muſt not be confounded with the ſucceſs. The attempt is readily granted, and that alone is ſufficient for conviction. But Chatterton really did ſucceed in his deception, and impoſed on many of his friends by this artifice. And it is but a dangerous apology in favour of a forger, to ſay, that he was *diſpoſed to exerciſe his inventive genius*. That Chatterton *plaid tricks* according to doctor Milles's account, with a piece of parchment, and wrote on it in an old hand, is an anecdote which had better been ſuppreſſed in a vindication of his veracity. But by Mr. Croft's Letter, from the atteſtation of the ſame very credible witneſs, it appears that Chatterton *diſguiſed* SEVERAL *pieces of parchment with the appearance of age*. For what purpoſe?

Conclusion. I could mention many other circumſtantial evidences relating to the proceſs and management of this forgery. But I do not wiſh to reſt my proof on evidences of this nature. It is not from the complexion of ink or of parchment, from the information of cotemporaries, the tales of relations, the recollection of apprentices, and the prejudices of friends, nor even from doomſday-book, pedigrees in the herald's office, armorial bearings, parliamentary rolls, inquiſitions, indentures, epiſcopal regiſters, epitaphs, tomb-ſtones, and braſs-plates, that this controverſy is to be finally and effectually adjuſted. Our arguments ſhould be drawn from principles of taſte, from analogical experiment, from a familiarity with antient poetry, and from the gradations of compoſition. Such a proof, excluding all impoſition, liable to no deception, and proceeding upon abſtracted truth, will be the ſureſt demonſtration. A man furniſhed with a juſt portion of critical diſcernment, and in the mean time totally unacquainted with the hiſtory of theſe poems, is ſufficiently, perhaps moſt properly, qualified, to judge of their authenticity. To ſuch a perſon, unprepared and unprejudiced as he is by any previous intelligence, and a

ſtranger

ſtranger to facts, let the poems be ſhewn. I can eaſily conceive to which ſide of the queſtion he will encline. Nor will he afterwards ſuffer his opinion to be influenced by reports. External arguments, ſuch at leaſt as have hitherto appeared, may be uſeful, but they are not neceſſary. They will hang out lights ſometimes falſe, and frequently feeble. In the preſent caſe, external arguments have ſeldom ſerved to any other purpoſe, than to embarraſs our reaſoning, to miſlead the inquiſitive, and to amuſe the ignorant.

THE END.

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